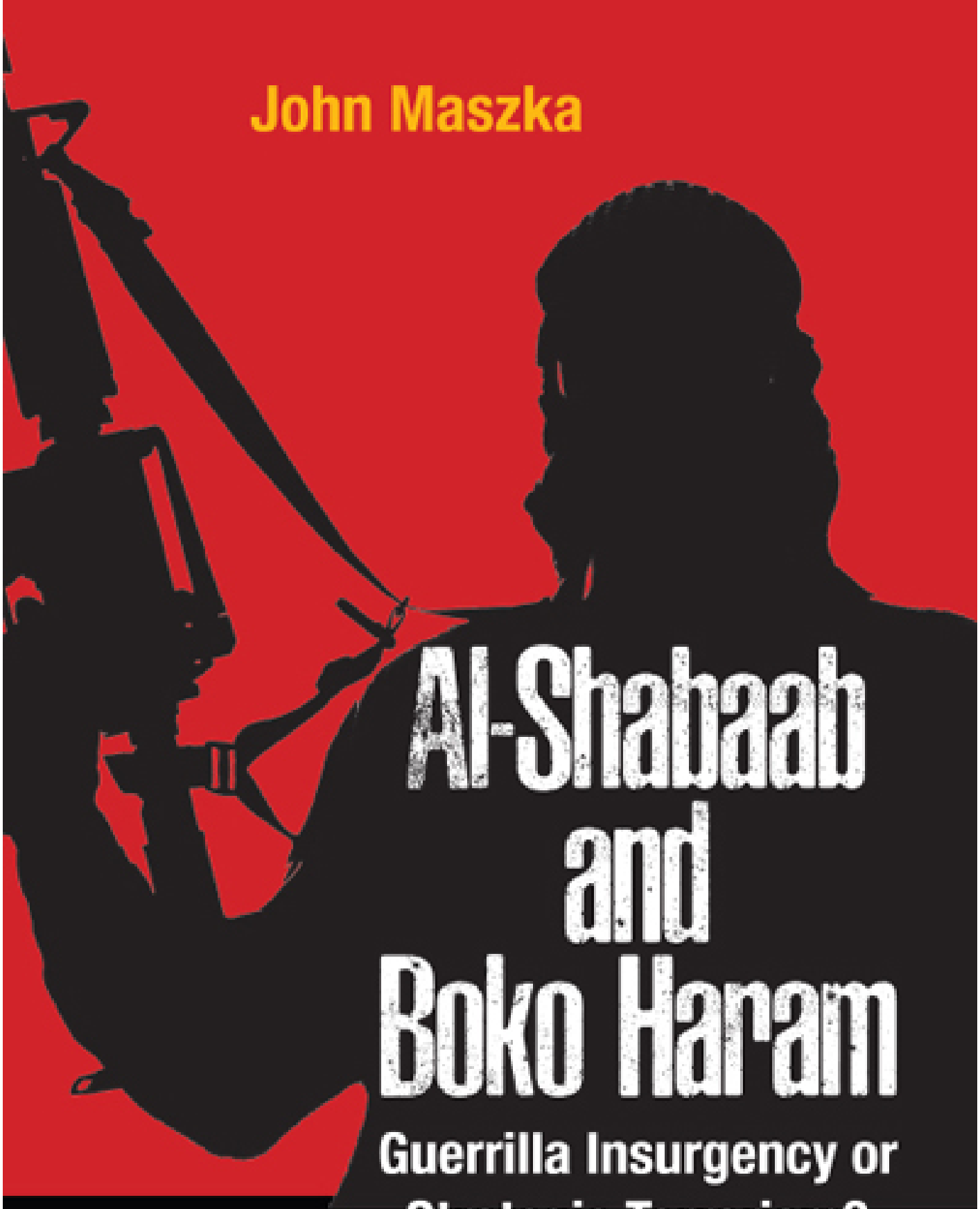
John Maszka



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Guerrilla Insurgency or Strategic Terrorism?

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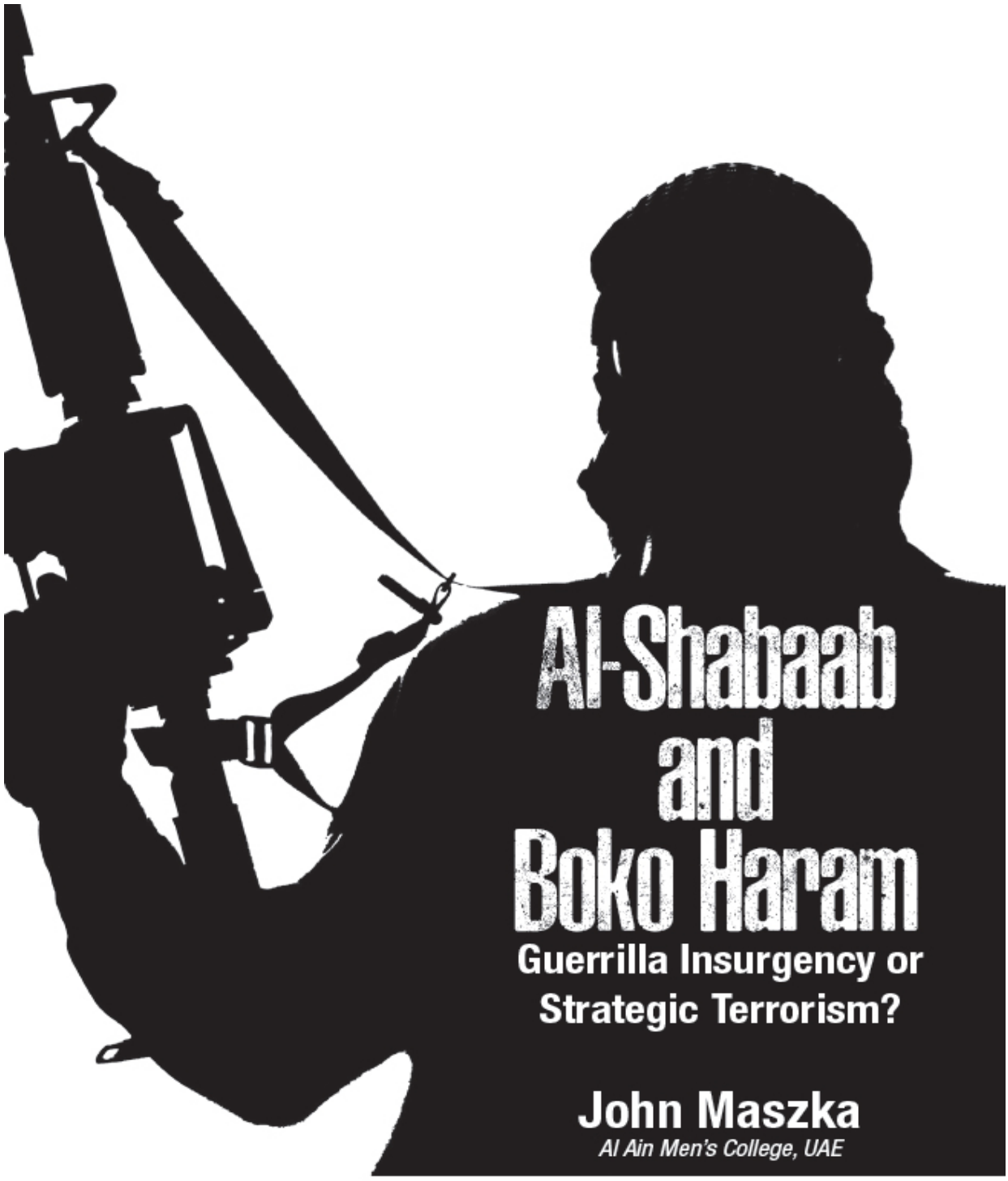

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Guerrilla Insurgency or Strategic Terrorism?

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Al Ain Men's College, UAE

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Dedicated to my students around the world
from whom I have learned so much.
Thank you!

Contents

Preface
About the Author
Acknowledgments

Chapter 1Strategic Studies

Retreat from Moscow
The Strategic Approach
Plato's Cave
Strategy
Strategic Studies since World War II

Chapter 2From Bin Laden to Baghdadi

Al-Qaeda's Strategic Objective
Al-Qaeda's Tactical Operations
The Islamic State
The U.S. Invasion of Iraq
AQI
A New *Caliphate*
Islamic State's Strategic Objective
Is Islamic State a Terrorist Organization?
Calculated Madness

Chapter 3Strategic Terrorism

Waterloo
What is Strategic Terrorism?

Following the Bread Crumbs
Vanguards

Chapter 4Somalia: The Teeth of a Lion

Wiil Waal
By and *Bay'ah*
History of Somalia
Pre-colonial History
Somalia's Colonial History
From Independence to the Islamic Union
From the Islamic Union to the Union of Islamic Courts
From the Union of Islamic Courts to al-Shabaab
From al-Shabaab to the Present Day

Chapter 5The Strategic Terrorism of al-Shabaab

Militant Groups in Somalia
Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya (AIAI)
Islamic Courts Union
Al-Qaeda
Al-Shabaab
Does al-Shabaab Employ Strategic Terrorism?
The Four Phases of al-Shabaab
Stage One — Disorientation
Stage Two — Provoking a Response
Stage Three — Gaining Legitimacy
From Near to Far

Chapter 6Nigeria: A Fight between Grasshoppers

The Oil Curse
History of Nigeria
Two Main Types of Militant Groups in Nigeria
Militant Groups Employing Strategic Terrorism
Militant Groups in the Niger Delta
The Ijaw National Congress (INC)
The Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA)

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)
The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)
The Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF)
Other Militant Groups in Southeastern Nigeria
The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)
Bakassi Boys
Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)
Militant Groups in Southwestern Nigeria
Insurgent Groups
A Race to the Bottom?

Chapter 7Boko Haram

Introduction
History of Boko Haram
Abubakar Shekau
Ansaru
Chibok Schoolgirls
A Change in Tactics
Shekau Pledges Allegiance to Baghdadi
Islamic State Announces a New Leader of its West African Affiliate
Boko Haram's Theoretical Underpinnings
Boko Haram's Strategic Goals
Does Boko Haram Employ Strategic Terrorism?

Chapter 8The Future of Terrorism and the Role of Strategic Theory

Introduction
Dogs and Postal Workers
A Pound of Flesh

List of Acronyms
Bibliography
Index

Preface

How can you tell medical marijuana from ordinary marijuana? By its smell? By its taste? By the type of people who smoke it? By the people who sell it? By its potency? No matter how hard you try to tell the difference, you can't because marijuana is marijuana. There are different varieties, of course. But the only difference between ordinary marijuana and medical marijuana is the purpose for which it is used.

The very same thing can be said of violence. How can we distinguish between various types of violence such as crime, war, insurgency, and terrorism? By the perpetrator? By the victim(s)? By the perpetrator's ideology or religion? By the type of weapons used or the extent of the carnage? As with marijuana, the only way to distinguish one form of violence from another is by the strategic objective of the actor. Terrorism is the use or threat of violence to coerce a political concession. Regardless of whether it involves bombs, guns, knives, an airplane (or a truck), violence is violence. If no political concession is demanded, it is not terrorism.

Why is this important? Because so much violence today is touted as terrorism when in fact it is something else altogether. This is especially true of extremist violence. Most of the violence that the media refers to as "Islamic terrorism" is neither Islamic nor terrorism. A great deal of it is geopolitical, not religious. Even much of the violence that is religious in nature is not terrorism because no political concession(s) are demanded. More often than not, this violence involves civil war, genocide, the mentally unstable or someone seeking their 10 minutes of fame. Very, very little of it can accurately be labeled as terrorism.

So how do we determine the strategic goal of an actor? We have to begin with a strategic analysis of the actor to understand its history, the

socioeconomic and political context in which it emerged, and how this context has framed the actor's choices and preferences. Only then can we begin to determine what the actor hopes to achieve.

This book investigates two of the deadliest organizations in Africa: al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.[1] In fact, in November 2015, Boko Haram surpassed Islamic State (IS) as the deadliest "terrorist" organization in the world based upon the sheer number of casualties the group has inflicted (Searcey and Santora, 2015).[2] The U.S. State Department designated al-Shabaab, a terrorist organization in February 2008, and it likewise designated Boko Haram, a terrorist organization in November 2013. But are these two groups actually "terrorist" organizations? Or should they more accurately be labeled insurgent groups? The answer to this question is not as straightforward as it may seem. The first order of business is to clearly define what we mean by "terrorist" and what we understand an "insurgent" to be.

In the most generic sense, we can differentiate between conventional warfare — which seeks to conquer the enemy — and terrorism — which aims to manipulate political change through terror (Ruby, 2002; Neumann and Smith, 2005). However, because the decision to employ terrorist violence is strategic, we can also distinguish between groups that employ terrorist violence as part of an overall strategy and those that rely solely on terrorist violence to achieve their goals. By employing this three-part typology, we are left with three basic categories of violence: (1) military violence intended to overthrow a regime, (2) terrorist violence employed along with a number of other tactics intended to coerce political concessions from a regime, and (3) terrorist violence employed as the sole means for obtaining political concessions. Neumann and Smith refer to this third category of violence as strategic terrorism, and they define it as the attempt to obtain political objectives through the use of primarily terrorist activity rather than through some other means (Neumann and Smith, 2005).[3]

Still, even with this simple trichotomy, the inquiry is not as straight-forward as it may appear because al-Shabaab and Boko Haram have both gone through a number of transitions in which their ideology and tactical operations have changed considerably. In the case of al-Shabaab, even its strategic goals appear to have changed. Therefore, we need more than a

superficial understanding of these two organizations and what they hope to achieve through violence.

In this book, I employ a strategic analysis of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. Strategic theory considers the utility of violence as a military strategy (Neumann and Smith, 2007). While most terrorism literature is concerned with *why* terrorist violence occurs or its causes, strategic theory seeks to "examine how political actors define the circumstances around them and how they react to those circumstances to achieve their objectives" (Smith, 1991, p. 17). By tracing the line of thinking of these two organizations, I strive to understand what their strategic objectives are, determine whether they have changed over the years, and measure how successful the groups' use of violence has been toward the achievement of their strategic goals.

After tracing each group's ideological underpinnings back through their respective predecessors, I examine the various phases that each organization has transitioned through and determine what its strategic objective is and whether it has changed from one phase to another.

A component of this analysis is the theory of perception of the other (Garfinkel, 1952).[4] Perception plays a huge role in both the decision to engage in terrorist violence and in the way target governments respond (Laqueur, 1977b; Crenshaw, 1981; Berry, 1987). Strategy is the use of one's resources toward the attainment of one's goals (Andrews and Roland, 1987). Therefore, how an actor perceives its own resources vis-à-vis the resources of another plays as large a role as the strategic goal itself. Furthermore, because both al-Shabaab and Boko Haram have adopted the *takfiri* doctrine which dramatically affects their tactical operations, perception of the other is indispensable for understanding how to interpret each group's actions as a means for obtaining their respective goals.

The *Takfiri* Doctrine

The *takfiri* doctrine is a radical *Sunni* interpretation allowing the accusation of a fellow Muslim of major unbelief (which is punishable by death) based on deed alone (Stanley, 2005; Lahoud, 2010). Typically, moderates acknowledge certain acts to be sufficient for the pronouncement of *takfir* (major unbelief). These include denouncing the faith, throwing the *Quran* in

filth, and wailing over the dead.[5] Other acts, such as a ruler not adhering strictly to *sharia* or an individual Muslim not fulfilling a particular obligation of the faith, are held by moderates to be minor unbelief and require that they be declared "permissible" by the actor before they constitute major unbelief (al-Rasheed, 2006; Crooke, 2015). The radical interpretation, on the other hand, is that any Muslim who believes differently than the *takfiri* (the one pronouncing *takfir*) is automatically guilty of major unbelief and therefore subject to immediate execution (Paz, 2005; Wood, 2015).

Although it may seem pedantic, it's important to differentiate between *Islamists* and *jihadists*. The aim of the first group is to reform both government and society in accordance with *sharia* (Islamic law) by operating within the political process. This goal sets them apart from the vast majority of moderate everyday Muslims who don't necessarily have any desire to live under *sharia*.

We can correctly date the beginning of *Islamist* ideology to the 1920s, when the Ottoman Empire was dismembered after World War I (WWI). This event was of supreme significance to *Sunni* Muslims everywhere because the Ottoman Empire was the last *caliphate* (Islamic empire), and the Sultan was the last *caliph* (deputy of the Prophet). Even though the *caliphate* had lost much of its actual power and influence over the centuries, the *caliphate* retained symbolic importance for *Sunni* Muslims because most believed that there could not be a valid *ummah* without a *caliph* to lead it. However, when Atatürk founded the secular state of Turkey, he abolished the office of the *caliph*.

Conservative *Sunnis* met together at a number of conferences to try and revive the *caliph*, but of course, there was widespread disagreement over who would assume the office. This attempt to bring Islam back into the state marks what many scholars refer to as the beginning of political Islam or *Islamism*.

Islamists such as Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949) and those who followed sought the re-establishment of the *caliph* and the reinstitution of *sharia*. Most *Islamists* are non-violent and seek political change through democratic elections. Those that are violent are typically referred to as *jihadists.*

We can see the distinction between the two in the teachings of al-Banna and Qutb. While both favored an Egyptian state in which *sharia* was the

law of the land, Qutb's vision differed greatly from al-Banna's regarding *how* to establish such a state. Al-Banna wanted to educate the Muslim people in the true way of Islam, starting with the individual, progressively working through the family, and so on. Then — once the people had learned the true way of Islam — they would be ready and able to employ the democratic process to create an Islamic state and share the pure religion of Islam with the rest of the Muslim world. In contrast, Qutb taught that a revolutionary vanguard should carry out an Islamic revolution and use force to create an Islamic state in Egypt.[6]

Just as we can distinguish *Islamists* from *jihadists*, we can make another important distinction between *jihadist* and *takfiri* groups. While *jihadists* maintain that violence against the apostate regime is necessary for instituting *sharia*, *takfiri* groups do not distinguish between the government and the governed (Podeh, 1996). In their estimation, *shirk* (idolatry) is *shirk*, and it doesn't matter who you are.

These groups justify their actions upon the *takfiri* doctrine which basically argues that anyone who does not agree with a particular interpretation of the faith should be excommunicated and killed. The doctrine dates back to the *Kharajites* in the seventh century who opposed the Umayyad dynasty, claiming that they were not true Muslims.

The *takfiri* doctrine has since been invoked by ibn Taymiyyah, Mohammad al-Wahhab, and Sayyid Qutb who envisioned an Islamic state that would impose true Muslim values on the Egyptian people and then export Islamic revolution to the rest of the Muslim world by waging *jihad* against any one that opposed s*haria* as the sole rule of law.

The doctrine resurfaced in Egypt in the 1960s with an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, *Takfir wal-Hijira* (Excommunication and Exodus). The group's followers spread the doctrine to Peshawar in the late 1980s and early 1990s where it influenced a number of *jihadists* including Zarqawi. The most notorious adherent of the *takfiri* doctrine is Baghdadi's IS, which has inspired literally dozens of other groups to follow its example.

We can imagine a large circle consisting of mainstream Muslims. Inside the large circle is a much smaller circle containing *Islamists.* Inside the small circle is a tiny circle containing *jihadists,* and inside the tiny circle is a dot which represents *takfiri* groups.

All three wish to establish *sharia*. While the majority of *Islamists* are willing to contest in democratic elections, the relatively small number of

jihadists reject democracy as an usurpation of the sovereignty of *Allah* and are therefore willing to employ violence against existing regimes to impose *sharia*. At the far extreme, *Takfiri* groups believe that by killing individual apostate Muslims, they're doing the will of *Allah* and preparing the way for the *Mahdi* (guided one).

While not every group fits into this typology perfectly, it serves as a methodological starting point from which we can discern an actor's strategy. We'll see this very important distinction again and again — from the *Islamist* approach advocated by the more moderate faction of the Muslim Brotherhood to the *jihadist* agenda outlined by al-Qaeda and finally the *takfiri* doctrine embraced by IS, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram. These three broadly defined ideologies inform how actors view their strategic environment. This view, in turn, greatly affects the strategy these groups employ to achieve their goals. The *takfiri* doctrine is the cornerstone of much of the violence committed by organizations such as IS, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram today (Lahoud, 2010; Crooke, 2015).

The Road Ahead

The structure of the book is quite simple. Chapter 1 emphasizes the importance of strategy in any conflict — particularly the Global War on Terror (GWoT). Strategic theory examines how political actors perceive their immediate reality and how effectively they respond to that perception toward the achievement of their strategic goal(s). I employ strategic theory rather than the traditional deductive approach used by most terrorism scholars as it allows us to analyze violence within its historical and socio-economic context rather than forcing us to strip away most of these details as theoretical models often do. Furthermore, strategic theory enables us to consider the utility of terrorist violence rather than simply attempt to identify its "causes." Most importantly, strategic theory makes it possible to trace the line of thinking between an actor and the violence that actor employs — thus making it possible to determine the actor's strategic goal, whether it be to overthrow an existing regime or to simply coerce political concessions. This basic distinction alone can solve the age-old question as to whether an actor is a "terrorist" or a freedom fighter. Once we have

determined an actor's ultimate strategic aim, we can then apply that knowledge toward a better understanding of its tactical use of violence.

Because al-Shabaab and Boko Haram did not emerge in a vacuum, it's critical that we understand their historical and ideological roots. Given that al-Shabaab has pledged *bay'ah* (allegiance) to al-Qaeda and Boko Haram has essentially pledged allegiance to both al-Qaeda and IS, it's important to assess the nature of these alliances and determine whether they have any impact on either group's strategic objectives or tactical operations. Chapter 2 offers a brief history of al-Qaeda and IS. The chapter also compares and contrasts the ideological underpinnings of the two groups and illustrates the need to understand each organization's strategic objective(s) in order to make sense of their respective use of violence.

In Chapter 3, we apply the framework of strategic terrorism to al-Qaeda and IS and conclude that it applies to al-Qaeda but not to IS.

The remaining chapters in the book follow a similar pattern: we discuss the historical and political context in which al-Shabaab and Boko Haram emerged, explore their ideological underpinning, employ strategic analysis to determine each organization's strategic objective(s), and apply the framework of strategic terrorism to see if it applies.

Why analyze al-Shabaab and Boko Haram through the lens of strategic theory rather than via one of the many theoretical models commonly employed by terrorism scholars? The short answer is that it works. In other words, it produces real answers rather than just findings that require "additional study."

Because many of the actors involved in the study are either dead or in hiding, the primary sources that I employ are a combination of media statements, video releases, and correspondence between these actors as well as my own field research and interviews with locals who have first-hand experience with the groups examined. However, even much of the original correspondence has been translated into English, and so I take advantage of secondary sources for their linguistic expertise. Furthermore, because many of the original social media accounts through which the key actors communicated have since been deactivated, much of this material has also been gleaned from secondary sources. Given that my analysis of the two groups is based upon their strategic objectives, I utilize the sources available to determine (as best as possible) what those strategic objectives are and to what extent they have changed over time.

Given that no actor is a true utility maximizer in the strict economic sense of the word, it is impossible to fully understand the decision-making of any entity without first comprehending the values to which it subscribes. Therefore, I explore the extent to which ideological, tribal, and religious factors influence and shape each actor's goals.

First, I consider each group's social context, analyzing relevant historical and contemporary details that shed light upon the organizations' stated political goals. Second, I examine each organization's predecessor groups and look for similarities and differences in strategic goals and tactics employed. Finally, after tracing each group's ideological underpinnings back through their respective predecessors, I examine the various phases each has transitioned through and analyze each phase to determine whether the two groups' strategic goals have remained consistent and if not, I note how they have changed and evolved since inception.

It is important to note that I do not attempt to establish causation. Also, since strategic theory is not a theoretical model per se but more a level of analysis, there are no independent or dependent variables to speak of. Rather, I employ a combination of assumption, observation, and deduction in order to determine each actor's preferences. My endeavor is to trace the group's line of thinking in order to determine (1) what each actor's strategic objectives are at any given stage and (2) whether its use of violence has been successful.

This inquiry reflects an important distinction between strategy and tactics. Strategy entails an actor's ultimate purpose while tactics are merely techniques employed to obtain that purpose. Actors engage in violence in order to attain a specific goal. The main focus of this book is to determine what al-Shabaab and Boko Haram's respective goals are, and therefore, whether they are insurgents groups or terrorist organizations. If we determine that either (or both) are engaged in terrorism, then the next question is whether they employ strategic terrorism.

Assumption is the first factor in the equation. It is important to be aware of any assumption one is making when analyzing groups such as al-Shabaab or Boko Haram. The assumptions one makes regarding an actor's use of violence are informed by the preference structure that the actor is believed to possess at any given time. In this respect, changing preferences create something of a moving target. Fortunately, the theoretical framework one uses can help to stabilize the analysis by providing a consistent set of

assumptions. For example, the rational framework assumes that actors will seek the most efficient alternative in an effort to maximize utility. The overarching rationale of strategic theory is comprised of three primary assumptions: (1) military force is a dimension of power exercised toward political goals, (2) politics is a game of thrones in which each actor strives to maximize its own power in relation to other actors, and (3) all actors act rationally. However, the danger in relying on assumptions alone is that one can never be 100% certain that they are correct.

Observation is the second element in the analysis. Because al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are both militant groups, and many of the original leaders and members are either dead or in hiding, it is difficult and dangerous to interview them directly. Therefore, the bulk of the observation involved in this analysis entails studying the two groups' videos, media releases, and various correspondence. For example, al-Shabaab initially employed YouTube, a variety of websites, and various chat rooms to raise finances and recruit members.

However, the organization has since become known for its sophisticated use of social media. The group's real-time tweets during the Westgate Shopping Mall attacks generated almost as much media attention as the attack itself (Menkhaus, 2013a). Much of this material, while originally in the public domain, is now only available through secondary sources as many of the original accounts have been deactivated. For instance, al-Shabaab's English language Twitter account, HSM Press, was deactivated in January 2013 after only having been active for 2 years (Anzalone, 2013; BBC, 2013; Hodge, 2014). At least six other Twitter accounts operated by al-Shabaab were also suspended in September 2013 (Hamza, 2013). Likewise, the various branches of the group's Radio al Andalus and multiple relay stations were also shut down as the group lost territory.

Ironically, even though al-Shabaab uses a variety of communication technologies to publicize its actions and disseminate its ideology, the organization has attempted to prohibit (or at least restrict) its use in areas under its influence or direct control. Al-Shabaab's leadership also placed a ban on the use of smart phones among its members, and in 2014, issued a directive that all members change their mobile phone numbers to prevent messages from being intercepted (Hodge, 2014).

In addition to the sources mentioned above, I also rely upon personal interviews with individuals who have witnessed these groups and the effects

they have had upon Somali and Nigerian society. The main problem with relying on observation alone is that observed behavior may not necessarily reflect one's true preferences. In fact, the second assumption of strategic theory suggests that actors will base their behavior upon their expectation of what other actors will or will not do — not upon their true preferences.[7] So, actions can be misleading.

The third tool I employ is deduction, which involves the application of pre-existing theories to determine whether their descriptive, explanatory, and predictive power holds true within the light of each new analysis. For example, there are many theories regarding the causes of terrorism (e.g., systemic, psychological, psychosocial, etc.). However, if we were to apply such theories to the violence of al-Shabaab or Boko Haram, we would quickly realize that these explanations are inadequate. We need a broader approach to understanding these militant organizations — one that considers their strategic objectives as well as their motives. In other words, it is necessary to know what they want before we can attempt to understand why they want it.

Unlike most competing titles that only consider the tactical violence of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram (and therefore categorize them as terrorist organizations), this book focuses on the strategic objective(s) of these two organizations and concludes that al-Shabaab began as an insurgency and adopted strategic terrorism while Boko Haram has consistently remained an insurgent group dedicated to the overthrow of the government and the establishment of *sharia* in Nigeria.

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[1]Some may question the decision to focus only on the African continent and to exclude other regions. As Laqueur (1977a, p. 13) concludes, "to compare the Narodovoltsy of the 1870s with the Symbionese Liberation Army or the Baader-Meinhoff gang would clearly be a waste of time…" Likewise, rather than taking a "shotgun" approach (in an attempt to increase generalizability), I have selected these two groups for their specific similarities. In addition to their relevance in the modern context, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram share important ideological roots that can be traced back several centuries.

[2]While I agree with the "deadliest" designation, I take issue with the "terrorist" label.

[3]Neumann and Smith's definition of strategic terrorism is virtually the same as Hardman's (1934) definition of terrorism.

[4]Please see Merleau-Ponty (1973), Abdallah-Pretceille (1983), Kornprobst (2002), Castano *et al*. (2003), Crozier (1998), and Millas (2004).

[5]See also, for example, a *fatwa* issued in 1982 by Shaykh Jadd al-Haqq (*mufti* al-Azhar University in Cairo) stating that only the refusal to profess *tawhid* (the unity of God) could justify the pronouncement of *takfir* upon a Muslim (Calvert, 2009).

[6]There are clear comparisons one could draw between Lenin and Qutb.

[7]See p. 16.

About the Author

John Maszka is a terrorism scholar and professor of International Relations. His areas of expertise include terrorism, strategic studies and Islamic extremism. Dr. Maszka was born in America but earned his PhD in the UK and has lived and taught in East Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Professor Maszka currently lives in the Middle East, and his research continues to take him to the far corners of the globe. Dr. Maszka is also the author of *Terrorism and the Bush Doctrine, Constructive Sovereignty: A New International Relations Theory for an Old Problem,* and *The Gospel Truth About Islamic Extremism: Confessions of a Terrorism Scholar*.

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Chapter 1

Strategic Studies

Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.
— Napoléon Bonaparte

Retreat from Moscow

As obvious as the quote above may seem, Napoléon no doubt learned this lesson the hard way in 1812 after he invaded Russia. The Russian military commanders were all too aware of the threat posed by the brutal arctic winters. They realized that if they could just hold out long enough against Napoléon's superior forces, the bitter cold itself would conquer the French invaders.

It's not as though Napoléon didn't understand the gamble that he was taking. He was thoroughly aware of the risk of overstretching his supply lines and the fury of the Russian winters. But he was determined to capture Moscow. Even though he knew that his troops were dangerously short on supplies and ill-equipped for *any* winter, Napoléon pressed on.

Alexander's forces adopted a policy of perpetual retreat, taking or destroying everything of value so as to leave nothing to the French. Long at last, with his supply lines hopelessly overextended and his men fatigued from the long march, Napoléon entered a deserted Moscow. With no Russian army to fight and no military commanders to surrender, the victory was bittersweet.

Napoléon had not only been deprived of his glory, but he'd also unknowingly marched his men right into a trap. The exhausted French

troops took shelter in the abandoned homes, only to be jolted from their slumber around 2 am by the horror of a raging inferno. Loyal Russian citizens had waited patiently — lurking in the frozen darkness — until Napoléon and his men retired. Then they set fires all around the city and fanned them into flames until Moscow was totally ablaze.

The French were forced to flee. But by then, the weather had turned against them. With no food or shelter, and lacking appropriate winter clothing, the *Grande Armée* lost the battle to sickness, frostbite, and hunger.

Napoléon had entered Russia with 680,000 men. By the time the French withdrew, 380,000 troops were dead; 100,000 had been taken prisoner; and roughly 50,000 were no longer fit for military service. By advancing too far and staying too long, Napoléon ignored sound military advice in pursuit of ambition. He may have taken Moscow, but he lost his army. Napoléon became so fixated upon the immediate prize that he lost sight of his long-term strategic objective — not just a city but an empire.

The Strategic Approach

Strategic theory examines *how* political actors perceive their immediate reality and *how effectively* they respond to that perception toward the achievement of their strategic goals. Put more simply, strategic theory allows scholars to evaluate the effectiveness of violence as a means to a desired end.

While most terrorism literature is concerned with the causes of terrorism and *why* actors engage in terrorist violence (i.e., motive), strategic theory examines *what* actors want and *how effective* their strategy is toward the achievement of their goals. Ultimately, the strategic approach sheds considerable light on the *why* question as well.

Of course, one major drawback of the strategic approach (for most terrorism scholars) is its limited ability to produce generalizable results. This is largely because strategic theory is not a theoretical model per se but more a level of analysis. For those who may not be familiar with jargon such as theoretical models and levels of analysis, it's really quite simple. Like most professionals, social scientists just try to make things sound more difficult than they actually are so that we can feel more important.

The scientific method is one way of testing the accuracy of a theory, which is just an educated guess as to why something is or why it occurs. We use theoretical models to express these theories and to test them. A typical theoretical model would look something like "smoking causes lung cancer." In this particular model, the independent variable (the thing that causes a reaction) is smoking. The dependent variable (the thing that's affected) is lung cancer.

The level of analysis refers to the type of independent variable considered — whether individuals or small groups (lower levels of analysis) or national or international variables such as economic, political, or religious factors (systemic levels of analysis).

Generalizability simply refers to whether results can be applied to a larger population. So even if we could prove that smoking caused one person to develop lung cancer, the next question would be whether we could apply that conclusion to all smokers. That's the general idea.

There are literally hundreds of theories concerning the causes of terrorism. Where do these theories come from? That's a big part of the problem. You see, the scientific method involves both induction and deduction. Induction is the collection of data from a specific phenomenon under analysis. In the case of terrorism, induction would involve collecting facts from actual attacks and from interviewing those involved. From this data, scholars hope to produce theories that they can then apply to other attacks, maybe even all terrorism attacks. The application of these theories is known as deduction. Scholars apply theories to test them and to determine whether their assumptions hold true within the light of each new analysis. But we have to keep in mind that the deductive process involves assumptions, not facts.

Unfortunately, very few terrorism scholars actually engage in the inductive process. Most rely solely upon deduction. In other words, most just apply existing assumptions without ever going out into the field to gather their own information. They pick a popular theory (or one that their research institute or publishing institution favors) and then they apply it to everything. Furthermore, because most terrorism scholars are completely focused on the cause of violence rather than the goal of those who engage in it, they mistakenly label all kinds of violent attacks as terrorism when, in fact, they're something else entirely.

So if terrorism scholars believe that Islam is inherently violent and therefore causes terrorism — and they honestly can't tell the difference between terrorism and insurgency, or genocide, or hate crimes — then they'll invariably try to connect every act of violence with the religion of Islam. Sound familiar?

Alternatively, strategic theory employs three primary assumptions: (1) military force is a dimension of power exercised toward political goals, (2) politics is a game of thrones in which each actor strives to maximize its own power in relation to other actors, and (3) all actors act rationally (Smith, 1991). In other words, there's a method to the madness. If the violence is random, irrational, and pointless, then it's probably not terrorism.

To elaborate on the first assumption, Clausewitz viewed war as an extension of policy. In other words, violence is just one way to get what you want. However, the opposite side of the coin is also true. In fact, Clausewitzian logic demands that force *only* be used as an instrument of policy. Therefore, strategic theory evaluates the use of violence as a tactic according to its efficacy in serving the policy that guides it — not according to moral or ethical sensibilities (Rousseau, 2012).

As for the second assumption, it's important to clarify that strategic theory considers all actors as unitary — an assumption that's borrowed from realism (Neumann, 2002). Therefore, even though individual differences among members of an entity are acknowledged in the overall evaluation of whether the use of violence is strategic, the decision to employ violence is analyzed via the perspective of a unitary decision maker.

Regarding assumption three, strategic theory assumes that all actors are rational — an assumption borrowed from economics. Rational in this sense doesn't mean reasonable. It means that actors make decisions based on a cost–benefit analysis rather than upon other considerations such as emotion or conviction.

However, rather than simply assuming unbounded rationality (a condition in which actors possess full knowledge and perfect objectivity), strategic theory also acknowledges the various limitations on actors' knowledge, capacity, time, and resources. One way to look at these two levels of rationality is the difference between "cold calculation" and "complexity" (Garnett, 1987, p. 19).

Aside from these three assumptions, the strategic approach is largely an inductive process which requires an analysis of both the conflict and the context in which it occurs to determine whether the use of violence is strategic or not. Consequently, the strategic approach places much more emphasis upon the conflict itself and the context in which it occurs than the traditional theoretical models employed by most terrorism scholars. This largely inductive nature of the strategic approach is perfectly acceptable given the goal of the strategic theorist. However, it flies in the face of the heavily deductive approach employed by most terrorism scholars, requiring that they put aside their cherished theories and let the data speak for itself.

Plato's Cave

War, in all its various manifestations, has historically been understood as a tool in the hands of rational actors — used as a means to obtain a desired political outcome. However, in the wake of World War II (WWII), the academic field of strategic studies artificially separated the study of conventional (interstate) war from most other forms of political violence. The main reasons for prioritizing the study of interstate war were: (1) the potential for a nuclear confrontation between the two super-powers took precedence over the relatively less important skirmishes breaking out around the planet, and (2) it was conceptually easier to count and compare military assets in the form of warheads and ballistic missiles than to assess the less quantifiable strength of will. As a consequence, strategic theorists largely ignored what they referred to as "irregular war" (Neumann and Smith, 2007).

Another heresy crept in during the Cold War era that would have an even more long-term effect on the future study of unconventional warfare — the equating of all non-Western insurgencies with the global threat of communism (Smith, 2005). As a result, the residual category of previously non-related conflicts took on a shared identity and came to be viewed as irrational, senseless, psychotic, and even evil (Frum and Perle, 2003). Consequently, those who did study these "lesser wars" tended not to apply the same Clausewitzian logic as they would to interstate wars.

In the case of terrorism studies, efforts to be more scientific led to the use of theoretical models that were then devised to determine the "causes"

of terrorism. Countless books and journal articles in every academic discipline imaginable have been published since, associating terrorism with a myriad of causes including poverty, illiteracy, inequality, democracy, authoritarianism, and mental illness — to name just a few.

By accepting the artificial separation of interstate war from all other types of political conflict, terrorism scholars have become so focused on the tactics employed in terrorist violence that we've stripped away all other relevant details. Without the benefit of strategic theory as the basis of our analysis, we've adopted a largely deductive approach. We now rely heavily upon the use of oversimplified models that "test" theories but largely ignore reality.

Having figured out how we've become so confused in the first place, the next task is to apply this understanding to finding a way out of our conceptual darkness. My approach to this dilemma is to search for illumination that can lead us back out of the cave. By analyzing the ideologies of infamous organizations such as al-Qaeda, IS, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and others, I follow the breadcrumbs that they leave behind and look for clues that explain their existence — not the garbage the politicians try to sell us but the real reasons these groups do what they do.

Colin Gray states that "the history of the use and threat of force enables us to make sense of the main currents of events" (Gray, 2013, p. 1). Most scholars in strategic studies recognize that in the wake of WWII, the academic field of strategic studies artificially separated the study of conventional (interstate) war from most other forms of political violence. Yet the vast majority of conflicts since the end of WWII have been non-conventional. So the million dollar question is, how do strategic theorists make sense of "the use and threat of force" that they pay no attention to? The answer is, they don't.

The result has been a blurred understanding of what is sometimes referred to as low-intensity conflict, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, or terrorism. So what's strategic studies got to do with terrorism? Not much, unfortunately. Terrorism studies is in a sense the unwanted bastard child of strategic studies. As stated above, strategic theorists largely abandoned the study of lesser wars during the Cold War. But as the offspring of strategic studies, terrorism studies is the rightful heir of its most prized possession — strategic theory.

Strategic theory allows scholars to evaluate the effectiveness of tactical violence as a means to a desired end rather than simply categorizing the violence according to common tactical uses as terrorism scholars tend to do. For instance, rather than arguing over whether the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were acts of war or acts of terrorism, strategic theory is concerned with whether bombing those two cities was effective. In other words, did the U.S. obtain its strategic goal?

In order to answer this question, you need to know what America's strategic goal was. I wasn't privy to the decision at the time, but assuming that the goal was to force the Japanese government to surrender, we can conclude that the use of tactical violence was effective. Likewise, we can say that deterrence theory was successful as a strategy during the Cold War in that neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union launched a nuclear weapon at each other.

Why can't terrorism studies be this simple? Politics. And this is the heart of the problem with terrorism studies. By focusing on the violence itself (rather than on the strategic value of the violence) and by attempting to define acts of violence by the tactics employed rather than the strategy behind it, we've opened the door for political actors to label their enemies as terrorists while excusing their own acts of violence (or threats of violence) as reasonable and necessary under the circumstances.

No, the strategic approach won't rid the world of politics, but at least we'll all be speaking the same language. Today, nearly every terrorism scholar has his/her own definition of terrorism, and virtually no one agrees on what terrorism actually is. However, it's really quite simple.

By determining an actor's strategic objective (whether to overthrow a regime or simply manipulate political concessions), we can distinguish terrorism from insurgency. This simple distinction alone can answer the age-old question as to whether an actor is a terrorist or a freedom fighter. In the process, strategic theory also allows us to assess whether an actor's strategy is likely to be effective.

Strategy

So what do we mean by strategy? Strategy is defined as "a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result"

(Andrews and Roland, 1987, p. 77). Still, the term has been used in such a vast number of contexts as to almost render it a cliché.

A Google Scholar keyword search using the term produced 5,000,000 results. If the first page is indicative of its most popular use, then one could say that strategy is a business term or perhaps an organizational term. Of the 10 results on the first page, five are related to business, three are related to organizational theory, one is related to preventative medicine, and one is related to the theory of evolution.

On the second page, seven results were business-related, one dealt with preventing substance abuse, and two were social science-related (an article on game theory and a confirmation of Kenneth Arrow's conditions for voting behavior).

Not one in the first 20 results were related to military or war. It's only on page three that T. C. Schelling's 1980 book, *The Strategy of Conflict*, appeared nestled in with nine more non-military results. Pages four through twelve were all non-military results. Finally, on page 13, the United States National Security Strategy appeared (Bush, 2002).

Of the first 130 academic publications listed in a Google Scholar keyword search for the term "strategy," just two military-related sources appeared. Yet the origin of the word is the Greek *strategos*, meaning general or military commander. *Strategos* is a derivative of the words *stratos*, which literally means something that lies beneath (figuratively, it can refer to an army or a camp), and *egos*, which means to lead (Andrews and Roland, 1987, p. 77). So the term is militant in origin if not in connotation. As Clausewitz famously defined it, strategy is "the use of engagements for the object of war" (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 128).

Elaborating on Clausewitz, it's necessary to distinguish strategy from tactics. Strategy is something you have, but tactics is something you do (Hughes, 1989). As Clausewitz reminds us, the aim of war is not to break the enemy but to force it to bend to your will. The same can be said of terrorism. It doesn't seek to break the enemy. Terrorism seeks to bend the enemy's will by coercing political concessions.

Strategy is often explained via the metaphor of a bridge that connects military capability with political policy (Cohen, 1996). Of course, this explanation of strategy focuses on its military aspects. Another way to look at strategy would be to consider it as the use of all of an actor's assets toward the fulfillment of a political end — what might be referred to as

grand strategy (Liddell, 1967). Again, the key focus is on the instrumental relationship between the assets at an actor's disposal and the policy outcome the actor wishes to achieve.

Thus, we can consider strategy as the employment of means to obtain a particular end (Neumann, 2002). Put more simply, one could say that sound strategy is the shortest available line between two points: an actor's current reality and the reality that actor hopes to secure. However, *reality* is an important factor in the equation. If an actor's means are insufficient, ill-equipped, or ill-adapted to achieve its political goals, then its strategy is not sound. In other words, policy should drive strategy and not the other way around.

In addition to several other problems with the GWoT (i.e., the lack of an identifiable enemy and the lack of a clearly demarcated theatre of war), one could argue that America's strategy actually drives its policy because the U.S. initiated the war with the military it had rather than the military required to achieve its goals (Strachan, 2005).

Not only is the decision to engage in political violence strategic, but the decision as to what type of political violence to engage in (whether traditional warfare, guerrilla warfare or terrorism) is also strategic (Waldmann, 2005). Therefore, sound strategy requires an actor to employ the means at its disposal *in such a way* as to achieve its policy objectives (we'll explore this concept further in our discussion of strategic terrorism).

Additionally, to act strategically assumes the involvement of two or more actors because strategy involves the anticipation of what another actor will do. As T. C. Schelling puts it, strategic analysis is "the art of looking at the problem from the other person's point of view" (Schelling, 1966, p. 2).

Just as strategy can entail the use of any means available to achieve a desired end, power entails more than mere military might. There are many types of power: coercive or military (hard power); persuasive, seductive, or diplomatic (soft power); and various combinations of the two — commonly referred to as smart power (Nye, 2006; Armitage and Nye, 2007; Wilson, 2008).

Given that the strategic approach is morally neutral regarding the type of power used, actors are scrutinized vis-à-vis their actions, their desired outcome, and the options available to them rather than according to more ethical considerations. In other words, strategic theorists evaluate the use of political violence according to its efficacy — not its morality.

An obvious question emerges at this point. If the strategic approach to studying all types of political violence is basically the same, why is such a huge distinction made between terrorism studies and the study of conventional (interstate) war? We'll address this question next.

Strategic Studies since World War II

The use of strategy in war is as old as warfare itself. However, the academic study of strategy can be dated to the post-WW II era. Much of the conceptual ambiguity surrounding terrorism stems from the academic tradition of separating terrorism and all other forms of low-intensity conflict from interstate war (Neumann and Smith, 2007). As a result, strategic analysts fail to apply the same Clausewitzian logic and methodology to the former as they do to the latter (Summers, 1985; Smith, 2003). Scholars studying intrastate war also tend to focus on insurgents and ignore the regimes involved in a conflict (Eckstein, 1965; Solomon, 2015, p. 224). However, there have been a plethora of governments throughout the world that have employed intrastate violence. In Africa alone, the tragic cases of genocide in Rwanda and Darfur are just the tip of the iceberg. Other African leaders notorious for their use of state-sponsored terrorism include Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Idi Amin in Uganda, President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, and Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi (Goredema and Botha, 2004).

Another reason for the focus on interstate war was the threat of global communism which inspired policy-makers in the West to view basically all anti-Western insurgents as terrorists (Smith, 2005). Hence, the tactics employed by these insurgents became the object of focus rather than their respective strategic goals (Teichman, 1989; Neumann and Smith, 2007). This largely remains the case today. If a group launches a suicide attack, we automatically assume that it must have been a terrorist attack. We base this assumption not on the strategic goal behind the attack but on the nature of the attack itself. The current approach is to lump actors all together based on their modus operandi (MO) and ignore other critically relevant distinctions between them.

Of course, the synonymous use of terms such as low-intensity conflict, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism to refer to all political violence

falling outside the category of interstate war is a misnomer at best. More importantly, it creates a number of analytical problems.

For example, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), led by John Garang, was widely regarded as a terrorist organization. However, it was an insurgent group that sought the exact opposite of what Islamic insurgent groups (such as Boko Haram) are striving for today. While Boko Haram fights to overthrow the secular regime in Nigeria and replace it with a government based upon *sharia*, the SPLM/A resisted the imposition of *sharia* by the Arabic government in Khartoum and fought for a united secular government in Sudan. In this respect, the SPLM/A was an insurgent group because its initial strategic goal was to replace the regime in Khartoum, not to exact political concessions. It's true that the SPLM/A did eventually strike a compromise with Khartoum, but this in no way made it a terrorist organization.

Even though the Sudanese government labeled the SPLM/A and other militants as "terrorists" in order to gain international support, the conflict was essentially a civil war. All parties involved engaged in deliberate war crimes including systematic rape, civilian massacres, slavery, the use of child soldiers, attacks against relief centers, and theft of humanitarian aid supplies to feed their armies. Between 1983 and 2002, the death toll exceeded two million while several international efforts to mediate a peaceful solution failed (Sidahmed and Soderlund, 2008).

In addition to the conflict between Khartoum and the SPLM/A, a division also existed between the SPLM/A (who fought to maintain a unified Sudan) and militias such as the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) who agitated for an independent South Sudan. Despite South Sudan's independence, the violence continues.

South Sudan is just one of many states plagued by intrastate violence today. Notwithstanding the fact that more than 80% of all military conflicts since 1945 have constituted non-conventional engagements, the separate treatment of interstate war and the arbitrary categorization of all other forms of conflict continues (Holsti, 1995). As the collapse of the Soviet Union brought still more international challenges, the concept of "new war" entered the discussion with several scholars debating whether Clausewitz was still even relevant to modern warfare (Stueck *et al*., 1989).[1]

In Chapter 2, we'll analyze the ideological underpinnings of al-Qaeda and IS. The chapter offers a brief history of both organizations and then

compares and contrasts the strategic goal(s) and tactics of al-Qaeda with those of IS.

[1]Please see Keegan (1997), Lambeth (1997), Gat (2001), Ignatief (2001), Wilkinson (2003), Gray (2005), Smith (2005) and Kaldor (2013).

Chapter 2

From Bin Laden to Baghdadi

> *All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on God, his Messenger, and Muslims…Jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries…On that basis, and in compliance with God's order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims: The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies — civilian and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.*
>
> — Bin Laden (1998)

The CIA had trained and armed the mujahidin to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. But once the Soviets withdrew, these same insurgents resisted U.S. hegemony in the region. Leading the pack was Osama bin Laden — the black sheep billionaire whose own family had supported the dynasty Operation Desert Storm was fought to defend. Outraged by the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia, he decided to do something about it.

Al-Qaeda's Strategic Objective

In this chapter, we'll compare and contrast the ideological underpinnings of al-Qaeda and IS. We begin with a brief discussion of al-Qaeda and then progress to a more thorough discussion of IS.

There's been so much media coverage of bin Laden and al-Qaeda that it need not be repeated here. Therefore, our discussion of al-Qaeda will be limited to a discussion of its core ideological composition. Since one cannot understand al-Qaeda's ideology without an understanding of its beginnings, we'll begin there.

Abdullah Azzam, one of the founders of al-Qaeda, was a Palestinian Islamic scholar and professor of Islamic philosophy at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. He eventually became known as *Amir al-Jihad* (Prince of Jihad) and grew famous for promoting universal militant *jihad* amongst his students. Rather than simply focusing on liberating Muslims from this state or that, Azzam taught that all Muslims everywhere had an individual duty to wage *jihad* until the entire international Muslim community was free.

Azzam argued that every able-bodied Muslim was morally obligated to engage in global armed *jihad* to liberate fellow Muslims. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Azzam was adamant that supporting the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan was an individual duty for every Muslim — those who could should go and fight.[1] He also insisted that once the war in Afghanistan was won, *jihad* should be taken everywhere that had once been under Muslim control. Azzam justified his position by taking the debate on warfare beyond *jus in bello* (legitimate means in warfare) to include *jus ad bellum* (legitimate grounds for warfare).

Offensive *jihad* was supposed to be sanctioned by authority. However, with no *caliph* to speak of, who had the authority? Azzam urged his students — including the young bin Laden — not to wait for the establishment of the *caliphate* to wage *jihad* but to take up the individual duty of *jihad* as *Allah* had commanded them.

Bin Laden largely picked up where his mentor — Abdullah Azzam — left off. He advocated both defensive and offensive forms of militant *jihad*, as well as the concept that universal *jihad* was a personal duty. We see this last influence in bin Laden's 1998 fatwa (quoted above).

The fact that bin Laden embraced the legitimacy of waging militant *jihad* in defense of Muslim soil is evident in his offer to employ al-Qaeda fighters to protect Saudi Arabia from a potential Iraqi invasion. Bin Laden also clearly embraced the legitimacy of waging offensive militant *jihad* as is evident by al-Qaeda's basic overall strategy: (1) to attack the far enemy in order to weaken the corrupt puppet regimes of the Middle East and (2) to liberate the international Muslim community by toppling those very regimes — at the very top of the list was the ruling family in Saudi Arabia (Gerges, 2005).

Bin Laden denounced the Saudi regime for its willingness to cooperate with the West and particularly for accommodating the American military on

what he regarded as sacred Muslim soil. In this regard, we can clearly trace the influences of ibn Taymiyyah and al-Wahhab in bin Laden's pronouncement of *takfir* upon the house of Saud.

Like Qutb, bin Laden and Zawahiri embraced the vision of a vanguard and the necessity of the use of military force to establish a Muslim state. There would be no election in which al-Qaeda would be found on the ticket (this was Zawahiri's main contention with the more moderate political aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood).

However, bin Laden and Zawahiri also wanted to build and safeguard popular opinion among the worldwide Muslim community so as not to tarnish the al-Qaeda brand (McCants, 2015). To an extent, they also believed that the Muslim people were largely ignorant of Islam (brain-washed by corrupting influences), and therefore, they had to be taught. In this respect, they were waging a campaign to win hearts and minds more in line with al-Banna and the moderates in the Muslim Brotherhood that Zawahiri despised.

Finally, al-Qaeda clearly broke with the Muslim Brotherhood's strategy of attacking the near enemy in favor of the strategy spelled out above. This decision was no doubt informed by Azzam's tremendous influence on the young bin Laden. But it was also due to al-Qaeda's sheer inability to overthrow the Saudi regime, which bin Laden attributed to American support. If al-Qaeda could have overthrown the Saudi regime, it most definitely would have. It certainly tried.

I was stationed in Riyadh at an American military base that was attacked by an al-Qaeda suicide bomber. The blast ignited the gas tanks on the base and completely destroyed an entire barracks. Thirty-five men were killed and hundreds more were injured. This was just one of many attacks intended to drive the Americans out. When that failed, al-Qaeda decided instead to draw us in.

It's suggested that bin Laden and Zawahiri were originally quite disappointed after 9/11 because the U.S. didn't respond in Afghanistan with an overwhelming ground force (McCants, 2015). Instead, the U.S. relied largely on airstrikes and collaborated with the Northern Alliance.

Fortunately, foreign policy analysts were warning as early as September 2001 that Bin Laden and Zawahiri were attempting to provoke the U.S. into committing a large number of ground forces and getting bogged down in

Afghanistan (Cullison, 2004). In this way, the U.S. would alienate the locals and provide al-Qaeda with a fresh new generation of recruits as a result.

Furthermore, a protracted war in Afghanistan would bleed the U.S. of its resources and political will just as it had the Soviets. Not to mention, the invasion of a sovereign state would put pressure on America's allies and give al-Qaeda yet another reason to criticize the United States. Most importantly, bin Laden wanted the opportunity to launch an attack successful enough to send the U.S. home with its tail between its legs — just as had happened in Lebanon and Somalia. When the U.S. didn't quite play into al-Qaeda's hands as they'd hoped, bin Laden and Zawahiri saw another great opportunity in Iraq.

Al-Qaeda's Tactical Operations

Many have speculated as to why al-Qaeda targets America. One speculation is that al-Qaeda hates America (Bush, 2001). In many respects, this theory is overly simplistic. What's there not to like? The U.S. has propped up corrupt regimes all over the Muslim world, it's been exploiting the region's oil resources for decades, and it stationed its troops on sacred Muslim soil. What's more, it invaded Iraq and has killed and displaced countless Muslims in the war on terror. Besides all this, the theory is still wrong — not because it isn't true — but because it's so disconnected with al-Qaeda's strategic goal.

Remember, bin Laden succeeded Azzam whose mission was to spark universal *jihad* to liberate Muslims everywhere. This remains al-Qaeda's objective. Bin Laden simply arrived at the conclusion that the most efficient way to accomplish this objective was to eliminate the U.S. from the Muslim world first and then go about toppling apostate Muslim regimes. Whether bin Laden hated America or not is completely irrelevant.

A related theory is that al-Qaeda is opposed to the freedoms guaranteed by a democratic form of government (Frum and Perle, 2003). Again, aside from being totally irrelevant to al-Qaeda's strategic goal, this suggestion in no way explains why the group would single out America. As bin Laden famously quipped, why didn't al-Qaeda attack Sweden?

A third argument is that al-Qaeda wants to punish the U.S. for its foreign policy in the Muslim world (Posen, 2006). This is absolutely true.

In fact, bin Laden said as much in his 2002 "Letter to America" (Bin Laden, 2002). However, what al-Qaeda wants and what they're ultimately attempting to achieve are not necessarily the same thing. Al-Qaeda *has* punished the U.S. for its foreign policy, time and time again. Still, it hasn't successfully eliminated American interference in the region.

It has also been suggested that America became al-Qaeda's target after emerging as the sole superpower following the fall of the Soviet Union (Anonymous, 2003). Again, this simply isn't relevant to the group's strategic objectives. Azzam encouraged al-Qaeda militants to go to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets because they had invaded a Muslim state, not because the Soviet Union was a superpower. Once the Soviets were forced out, Azzam instructed the *mujahidin* to switch to aggressive *jihad* and start taking back lands that were lost to the infidels.

When bin Laden took over at the helm, he had a choice to make. He could (1) follow Azzam's instructions and invade Israel or attempt to retake Lisbon, Cordova, Avignon, the Island of Rhodes, etc., (2) go after the apostate Muslim regimes, or (3) target the far enemy. While there were clearly tactical advantages in landing a major blow against the only remaining superpower on the planet — and bin Laden took full advantage of these — they were not the main reasons behind the attacks.

Lastly, several have alleged that, as part of the new generation of terrorists, al-Qaeda has no rationale behind its actions at all. It's purely irrational, and it just wants to kill a lot of people (Carter *et al*., 1998). If that truly were the case, wouldn't it be a lot easier and cost effective to just stay home and kill everyone there?

Alan Cullison, who had the rare opportunity of purchasing Muhammad Atef's laptop and Zawahiri's desktop computer, concluded that al-Qaeda's main reason for the attacks on 11 September 2001 was to galvanize the group's militants (Cullison, 2004). Al-Qaeda's leaders remembered how fighting the Soviets brought a sense of unity to the fighters in Afghanistan.

Beyond that, bin Laden hoped to (1) provoke the U.S into overreacting and committing human rights atrocities which would cost it legitimacy in the eyes of the global community and (2) draw the U.S. into a long and costly ground war which would erode American's political will to stay involved in the region. We can correctly apply the same strategic objective to each and every attack against American interests. The goal is to get the U.S. to leave the Muslim world alone.

Fortunately, from our brief strategic assessment above, we can determine that al-Qaeda *does* have a strategy. What's more, despite the slew of claims to the contrary, it has been following that strategy for the most part. There are, no doubt, a number of tactical maneuvers that are more difficult to explain than others (blunders and absurdities, to paraphrase Emerson). Still, a working knowledge of the group's strategic goal allows us to understand much more readily why al-Qaeda has made many of the tactical decisions that it has.

For example, the 1992 Yemen Hotel Bombings, the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, and the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were all obvious measures of coercive diplomacy intended to put pressure on American policymakers to evacuate the Middle East. Al-Qaeda didn't launch these attacks because it hates the U.S. or because it hates freedom. Nor did it perpetrate these attacks because it's crazy. And while the attacks did punish the U.S., and the group definitely gained some street credit, this was not al-Qaeda's strategic objective.

The analysis above is fairly straightforward. But it becomes a bit more convoluted when we consider less obvious attacks such as the November 2003 suicide attack outside Riyadh that killed 18 and wounded over 100 more — most of whom were Saudis. The reasons behind these attacks are not so easily identifiable without a proper understanding of al-Qaeda's strategy.

Bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* instructs every single Muslim to kill Americans wherever they may be found. Given the emphasis on militant *jihad* as an individual duty and the understanding that *jihad* is universal, it shouldn't be surprising that attacks against tourists around the world increased dramatically after bin Laden released his *fatwa*.

There has been tremendous speculation regarding the November 2003 suicide attack outside Riyadh. Some suggest that al-Qaeda hit the softer Saudi target because the American targets in the city were already sufficiently hardened. Another theory is that al-Qaeda was hoping to demonstrate that the Saudis cannot protect their own people. Still others speculate that al-Qaeda attacked the housing complex to scare the roughly six million foreign workers in the Kingdom into fleeing, hoping to cripple the Saudi economy (Miller, 2003).

All of these suggestions could be accurate. Or maybe not. Who knows? Without a working knowledge of al-Qaeda's strategy, all one can do is

speculate. However, when we understand al-Qaeda's strategy, we can better make sense of its tactics. Therefore, given al-Qaeda's concern for public opinion, the first option is plausible but highly unlikely.

The group did launch a similar attack on an American compound in May of the same year. However, al-Qaeda enjoyed considerable public support in Saudi Arabia at that time — even among some members of the royal family (Atwan, 2008). And when we consider bin Laden's justification for killing Americans — namely that America has killed so many Muslims worldwide — it would be counterproductive to intentionally target a site comprised solely of Muslims.

The second option is also plausible but highly unlikely for much the same reason. How much sense does it make to kill the very people you claim to defend just to prove that your enemy can't protect them? That's no way to win hearts and minds. Not to mention, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia are allies. To demonstrate that the Saudis can't protect their own people might put pressure on the U.S. to increase its presence in the region and provide more support to the Saudi regime.

This brings us to the third option. Given al-Qaeda's strategy of attacking the far enemy, it makes perfect sense for the group to attempt to frighten foreign workers as this plays right into its game plan. However, to jeopardize popular support by attacking Saudi Muslims doesn't fit al-Qaeda's strategy.[2] So why did it do it?

A little digging uncovers the fact that the housing complex al-Qaeda attacked was once used to house American employees of the Boeing Company. Therefore, a fourth theory might be that the attack was based on outdated information. Given al-Qaeda's focus on the far enemy — and especially considering that it launched a suicide attack on an American compound in May of the same year — this last explanation makes the most sense.

If you've ever been to the kingdom, particularly Riyadh, it's easy to understand outdated information. The first thing that you miss (besides pork and alcohol if you're so inclined) is civil society. There isn't even an empty space where civil society should be as you find in some former totalitarian states. It's as if Riyadh were intentionally constructed to keep personal interaction outside of the home to an absolute minimum.

There's a fortress mentality in the city. Everything is walled in, gated up, or locked. New construction is going up all the time, only to remain

vacant. Brand new malls stand empty. Even the nicest buildings are surrounded by huge piles of sand and gravel. In spite of some of the worst (and deadliest) traffic in the world, the entire city feels deserted. So, of the four possible explanations, the last one is the most plausible given our understanding of al-Qaeda's long-term goals.

In this first portion of the chapter, we've identified al-Qaeda's strategic objectives and demonstrated how a proper knowledge of these can help us to make better sense of the group's tactical operations. From this discussion it's clear that al-Qaeda is a *jihadist* organization that has relied solely upon violence as the primary means for attaining its strategic objectives.

Some may take issue with my designation of al-Qaeda as a *jihadist* group rather than a *takfiri* group. For example, Tom Quiggin points out that al-Qaeda regularly makes use of the *takfiri* doctrine to discredit its opponents (Quiggin, 2010). However, while employing violence to manipulate concessions from target governments, al-Qaeda does not endorse the killing of apostate Muslims as an end in itself as we see with *takfiri* groups such as IS, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram.

Recall that Azzam was a staunch opponent of the *takfiri* doctrine. He was so opposed to it that he issued a *fatwa* against the doctrine claiming that the killing of fellow Muslims and civilians is against Islam. Yet, Azzam clearly supported the use of violence against apostate regimes toward the ultimate end of regaining lost Muslim territory and establishing *sharia* (Kepel, 2004; Wright, 2007). And while it's certainly true that al-Qaeda targets American civilians, the goal is to drive the Western militaries — and particularly the U.S. — out of the Muslim world. The main difference between *jihadists* and *takfiri* groups is that the first group employs violence against civilians to coerce political concessions from a target government while the second kills civilians because it believes that they are apostates. For the first group, violence is a means to an end. For the second, violence is an end in itself. This is a critical distinction that you will likely never hear discussed in the mainstream media because it doesn't fit within the framework of "us vs. them" or the 10-second sound-bites used to advance it.

In the second part of this chapter, we'll examine the strategic goals of IS as well as compare and contrast the ideological underpinnings of al-Qaeda and IS.

The Islamic State

The group we now know as IS began in 1999 as *Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Jihād*, "The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad" (JTJ). It was founded and co-led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri. Based in Iraq, JTJ mainly focused on training suicide bombers in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Teslik, 2006).

Zarqawi was born Ahmad Fadil Nazal al-Khalayel in the town of Zarqa, Jordan on 20 October 1966 (Smith, 2006). He was a high school dropout who went to prison for 5 years at the age of 18 for sexual assault and drug possession. While in prison, he was exposed to radical *Islamist* influences.

In 1989, Zarqawi moved to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. However, the war was basically winding down by then. So he settled in Peshawar — which is where he was most likely exposed to the *takfiri* doctrine as it was circulating in the area at that time. It was in Peshawar that Zarqawi earned the nickname *al-gharib* (the stranger). It was here that he is believed to have developed his tremendous animosity toward moderate Muslim governments and his intense hatred toward *Shia*.[3] It's also possible that this is where Zarqawi first met bin Laden.[4]

We know considerably less about al-Masri. He was born in Egypt, became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and later joined Egyptian Islamic Jihad in 1982. He received explosives training at bin Laden's Al Farouq militant camp in Afghanistan, which is where he's believed to have met Zarqawi (Caldwell, 2006).

When Zarqawi learned that the U.S. planned to commit troops to Iraq, he began to set up a network in Iraq and reached out to al-Qaeda for support. Zarqawi's vision was the exact opposite of bin Laden's, however (Fishman, 2006).

Bin Laden was convinced that the establishment of the *caliphate* had to wait until America was driven out of the Middle East and the corrupt puppet regimes in the Muslim world were overthrown. Only then would Muslims be strong enough to establish the *caliphate*. Zarqawi insisted that Muslims were only as strong as their leaders. He wanted to set up an Islamic state immediately. Rather than attempt to win the hearts and minds of the majority of Muslims as bin Laden wanted to do, Zarqawi wanted to wage a brutal campaign that would instill fear, not win popular support. Here again,

we see the tension between al-Banna's more conciliatory bottom-up approach and Qutb's authoritarian top-down approach.

Perhaps of greatest importance was Zarqawi's position on excommunication. Zarqawi believed that *takfir* should be pronounced on all Muslims who did not strictly adhere to the *Salafi* tradition. Zarqawi had no desire or intention of tolerating what he regarded as heretics, whether they be the house of Saud, *Shi'ites*, or common every day *Sunnis*. In his view, the near enemy was not just the corrupt puppet regimes propped up by the West. Zarqawi believed that the near enemy was comprised of every single apostate Muslim in the region and that this enemy posed a far more dire threat to Islam than the West.

In Zarqawi's perception, all apostate Muslims were the enemy, and therefore, they must be eliminated. Zarqawi would make no effort to gain legitimacy in their eyes. He planned to achieve his objectives through violence and violence alone. Zarqawi's radical view of *takfir* and his brutal campaign of terror would also become the hallmarks of his successors in IS (Bradley, 2005).[5]

Zarqawi clearly embraced Qutb's broader definition of *dar al-Islam* to include both the physical territory controlled by Muslims as well as faith, community, and the Muslim way of life. And Zarqawi argued that *jihad* should be used to defend Islam first and foremost from apostate Muslims.

Bin Laden was concerned that Zarqawi's sheer brutality would tarnish al-Qaeda's image and thereby jeopardize the future success of his own political program. Still, bin Laden and Zawahiri recognized a great opportunity in Iraq to expand their influence. So, bin Laden originally agreed to cooperate with JTJ but not to take it on as an al-Qaeda affiliate.

The U.S. Invasion of Iraq

In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq along with a coalition of troops from allied nations, removed Saddam Hussein from power, and destroyed much of Iraq's infrastructure. By May 2003, the American-led multinational coalition ousted the Ba'ath Party and proceeded to occupy the country.

Along with dismantling the Iraqi army and attempting to rebuild it largely by arming militias, the coalition installed an interim government

that was ineffective to say the least. Major cities suffered shortages of electricity, clean water, phone services, and garbage collection for at least a year after the invasion. Looting was also a major problem.

The U.S. also appeared to have little or no respect for the Iraqi people or their culture. Former Minister of Defense, Ali Allawi, recalls that American soldiers conducted full body searches of women, searched Iraqi homes without a male head of the household present, and publicly humiliated the elderly (Allawi, 2007). Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Fred Kaplan, further recounts that the American military's counterterrorism strategy largely entailed "killing suspected insurgents, surrounding whole neighborhoods, pounding down doors in the middle of the night," and other clever attempts at winning hearts and minds (Kaplan, 2014, p. 77).

Hostility against the American occupation was such that in April 2006, a poll revealed that 97.9% of Sunnis were either opposed or strongly opposed to the U.S. presence in Iraq (Lynch, 2011).

I befriended the family of a Ba'athist officer who had been killed during this period. The family had managed to move to the United States but continued to relive their own personal nightmare as they watched events unfold on television. They used to spend hours describing to me what it was like to live amid continual shelling, power outages, water shortages, and of course, constant fear.

During this time, tens of thousands of private security forces were brought in to protect the remaining oil infrastructure. As the military fought increasing numbers of guerrilla units, they rounded up thousands of Iraqi men suspected as radical militants and imprisoned them. Unfortunately, many of these were ordinary Iraqi citizens who, while in prison, became radicalized through their interaction with militants such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of IS.

In February 2004, Baghdadi was arrested and incarcerated at Camp Bucca, which housed more than 100,000 men between 2003 and 2009. The camp was sub-divided into compounds of approximately 1,000 inmates each. Inside Bucca, radical *Sunnis* declared *sharia* and tortured anyone who refused to obey by cutting out their tongue or gouging out their eyes (Weiss and Hassan, 2015). Bucca is now regarded as an incubator for IS as many of the worst *jihadists* detained there eventually joined the group including Baghdadi, Abu Suja, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, Abu Jurnas, Abu Louay, Abu Shema, and Abu Kassem (Gunter, 2015).

AQI

In October 2004, Zarqawi applied to al-Qaeda for his group to become an affiliate. This time around, bin Laden agreed. By now, Zarqawi's brutal tactics were producing results. On the one hand, Zarqawi was too valuable to turn away. He may have been a loose cannon, but he was a cannon nonetheless. On the other hand, bin Laden hoped that he could control Zarqawi and minimize the risk to the al-Qaeda brand.

An important tactical barrier had also been removed. It takes a very different level of capability to attack the United States than it does a local mosque or police headquarters. However, the U.S. invasion of Iraq brought the far enemy near. Bin Laden now had the best of both worlds: the U.S. military was within reach, and Zarqawi's bloodlust would provide bin Laden the opportunity to send U.S. soldiers and personnel home in body bags.

Zarqawi officially changed the name of the group to *Tanẓīm Qāʿidat al-Jihād fī Bilād al-Rāfidayn*, "The Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers," popularly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The new name was debuted on a video release of the beheading of Ken Bigley, a British engineer.

Scholars differ on the exact relationship between bin Laden and Zarqawi regarding who was courting whom. However, most agree that the two groups used each other. AQI benefitted from the fame of the al-Qaeda brand, and al-Qaeda general wanted to spearhead Zarqawi's operation in Iraq. Both groups enjoyed tactical benefits, a wave of fresh recruits, and widespread publicity from the merger. However, it was an alliance of pure convenience and nothing more, and al-Qaeda would soon regret the decision.

Zarqawi quickly demonstrated that he could not be controlled. Rather than moderate his own position, he attempted to radicalize everyone else — especially the *Sunni* tribal leaders — by provoking widespread *Shi'ite* retaliation against the *Sunnis*. This he hoped would radicalize the *Sunnis*, who would then put pressure on the tribal leaders. By attacking both sacred and secular targets and murdering mass numbers of civilians of all faiths, Zarqawi hoped to spark an all-out sectarian war.

History has seen this strategy played out again and again, from Charles Manson in the 1960s to the 2010 race riots in Kyrgyzstan, where violence

between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks continued for 3 months until Soviet troops intervened. Manson hoped to spark a racial confrontation between Blacks and Whites in America, while it's rumored that the Kremlin was behind the violence that killed as many as a thousand people in the space of a few months in the former Soviet republic.

An Uzbek friend of mine detailed the horror he experienced during the outbreak of what has been referred to as ethnic cleansing in the Kyrgyz city of Osh.

"Someone was banging on our door, trying to get in … Outside everyone was screaming. Eventually, I had to go out … I was terrified. People were fighting all over the city."

As he relived the horror, I was reminded of the Rodney King Riots in 1992. I was on a flight from Honolulu to San Francisco as the violence broke out across the state (and the nation). The smoke from the fires that rioters had set ablaze was so thick that we were nearly rerouted to Sacramento. After about a 40 minute delay, the plane did finally land in San Francisco, but on the ground it was sheer pandemonium. As I drove from the airport to Santa Clara, exits were blocked, and fires were burning everywhere. Bush had deployed the military to restore order, and a curfew had been imposed. It was like a scene from Mad Max.

Once I reached my destination, I watched as looters broke into stores and rioters smashed car windshields — all fueled by rage. In the immortal words of David Bowie, I kept thinking to myself, "This is not America." But it was. Ethnicity and race can be powerful rallying forces.

Although Zarqawi's plot didn't immediately produce the extent of sectarian violence that he'd hoped for, his cold-blooded brutality and systematic recklessness was successful in both terrorizing and polarizing much of the Iraqi population. An Iraqi friend of mine explained that even something as benign as wearing green clothing in public could spark a violent sectarian reaction.

Zarqawi's notorious beheadings as publicity stunts also won the group enormous worldwide attention.[6] The group released video footage of the beheading of Americans, Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong. Despite pleas from al-Qaeda general to tone it down, Zarqawi was on fire. A rising star on the *Islamist* horizon, he was about to go supernova.

2006 turned out to be a pivotal year. Zarqawi wanted to do something big to escalate the sectarian conflict. He deeply resented what he saw as

favoritism for the *Shia* on the part of the U.S. In January, AQI joined a number of other Iraqi insurgent groups to form *Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin*, the "Mujahidin Shura Council" (MSC), with Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi as *emir*.

In February, the group attacked the *Imam al-Askari* Shrine in Samarra — one of the most important *Shi'ite* holy places in the world — sparking reprisals against five *Sunni* mosques in Baghdad. On 20 May, Nouri al-Maliki was appointed as prime minister. In Zarqawi's mind, the appointment was just further evidence of the U.S.–*Shia* conspiracy. Even al-Qaeda central appears to have been alarmed (Caldwell, 2006).

The move to join MSM backfired on Zarqawi. If there's strength in numbers, there's also a certain amount of increased vulnerability. Due to its brutal treatment of all civilians — whether *Shia, Sunni,* or non-Muslims — AQI made *a lot* of enemies. This eventually turned even many loyal *Sunnis* against it, culminating in the Sunni Awakening.

With the expansion of AQI came an increased threat, and it's likely for this reason that U.S., Iraqi, and Jordanian intelligence operations were able to obtain vital information on Zarqawi's whereabouts (Fishman, 2006).

The U.S. assassinated Zarqawi on 7 June 2006, and in October of that same year, MSM combined forces with several more *Sunni* forces and formed the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) again with Abu Abdullah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi as *emir* and Zarqawi's longtime colleague and successor, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, as leader.

A New *Caliphate*

ISI claimed to have established the *caliphate*, and it demanded that all the other militant *Islamist* groups pledge allegiance. But as of then, ISI controlled no territory, so the other *militants* just laughed. Both Baghdadi and al-Masri vowed to uphold Zarqawi's *jihad* against the near enemy. However, both men were assassinated by the U.S. on 18 April 2010, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi emerged as the new leader of ISI a month later.

In 2011, American troops pulled out, leaving behind a destabilized Iraq with virtually no infrastructure — awash with American weaponry. This development gave ISI exactly what it needed: weapons, space, and time. Because the group adhered to a strict *Wahhabi* Islamic doctrine, it also

enjoyed financial support from a number of Gulf States. Add to these resources the experience and expertise of a significant number of former Baathist commanders from Saddam Hussein's recently toppled regime, and you have a recipe for today's IS (Gunter, 2015).

2011 is also the year that ISI joined the rebellion against the Assad regime in Syria. In April 2013, Baghdadi declared that ISI was extending its territory to include Syria. The group also advanced into Kurdish areas of Iraq and began to kill and enslave thousands of Yazidis. Countless Yazidi women and girls were taken as sex slaves while others were given away as political patronage or sold on the open market. Of course, Obama responded by authorizing more than 10,000 air strikes — killing tens of thousands and further exacerbating civilian suffering. The official number of civilian casualties in Iraq for the past 2 years alone is in excess of 20,000. The actual number is likely much, much higher (just imagine John Kirby lying through his teeth, and you get the idea). No one is even trying to keep an accurate account of civilian casualties in Syria any longer.

The group officially changed its name to Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and alternatively Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Baghdadi also announced that ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) — al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria — were the same organization. JN's leader — Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani — denied the claim and publicly reaffirmed *bay'ah* (allegiance) to Zawahiri.

Al-Qaeda central ordered Baghdadi to return to Iraq and to leave Syria to JN. Baghdadi rejected Zawahiri's attempt to control him and publicly denounced al-Qaeda for honoring the infidel Sykes–Picot Treaty. Baghdadi's brutality against apostates also led Zawahiri to publish "General Guidelines for the Work of a Jihadi" in September 2013, attempting to set in stone the rules of engagement for al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Baghdadi ignored these instructions as well.

Al-Qaeda officially cut ties with ISIS in February 2014, and in June of that year, Baghdadi officially changed the name of his organization to IS after announcing the establishment of a new *caliphate*. This time, no one was laughing. IS now controlled large areas of land and embarked upon a blitzkrieg of brutality — capturing entire cities, massacring thousands, and taking as many, if not more, as slaves.

Islamic State's Strategic Objective

IS maintained the exact same three-fold strategy that it had followed from the beginning:

(1)Establish the *caliphate* first. Where al-Qaeda believed that the establishment of the *caliphate* had to wait, IS insisted that the first step should be to establish the *caliphate* and then expand it. While no one affiliated with al-Qaeda was qualified to be *caliph*, Baghdadi claimed to be a descendant of Muhammad's tribe.
(2)Reign through terror. As a *takfiri* group, IS would waste no time attempting to win hearts and minds. Rather, it would reign by sheer terror — mercilessly slaughtering infidels and apostates without hesitation.
(3)Promote the fulfillment of prophecy. IS places enormous emphasis on apocalyptic prophecy. The group originally promoted the idea that the *Mahdi* would appear to usher in the apocalypse within a few months. When this didn't happen, IS changed its message and started promoting itself as the fulfillment of prophecy — stating that after the reign of four or five pure rulers, the *Mahdi* would come (McCants, 2015).

Baghdadi maintains strict centralized control over a loosely decentralized regional command structure. For instance, Baghdadi might decide on a target and a date well in advance, but regional commanders decide the rest based on various realities at the time and place. The autonomy enjoyed by regional commanders affords IS the ability to avoid situations where the opponent has the upper hand.

Still, Baghdadi has demonstrated his skill as a military commander by successfully adopting a tactic used by Saladin (1137–1193) against the crusaders. By extending the battle line as wide as possible, IS spreads the enemy thin which often offsets any imbalances of troop strength. Meanwhile, the group makes full use of the means at its disposal — namely highly mobile units, suicide bombers, and of course, social media campaigns designed to terrorize the opponent with images of the organization's brutality (Gunter, 2014).

In June 2014, IS took control of Mosul — Iraq's second largest city. The following month, Baghdadi anointed himself the *caliph* of the Islamic

world. He claimed to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, which is quite a claim because neither the Saudi royal family nor bin Laden descended from the Quraysh tribe. Consequently, neither could establish the *caliphate*.

Baghdadi also holds a PhD in Islamic studies from the Islamic University of Baghdad. He uses his extensive knowledge of the *Quran*, *ahadith* (recorded words and deeds of the Prophet), and *Sunnah* (religious practices established by the example of the Prophet) to call attention to the legitimacy of his claim to be the *caliph*. Virtually everything that IS does is intended to re-enact famous battles and demonstrate that IS is the fulfillment of Islamic apocalyptic prophecy.

Take Baghdadi's appearance for example. IS adheres to traditional *Wahhabi* beliefs that glorify the first three generations of Islam as the most pure. So he fashions his appearance after the rightly guided rulers of that age: Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib. Even his name is taken after the first successor of Muhammad. His real name is Ibrahim Awwadty Ibrahim Ali Muhammad al-Badri al-Samarrai (Chulov, 2014).

Another example is the rampage of brutal violence that IS has been engaged in for the past decade. To most outsiders, it appears to be random, senseless killing. However, *Sunni* Muslims realize that the first duty of the *caliph* is to spread Islam — whether through peace or through war — and beheading was the prescribed manner of execution in the *Quran*.

Even the name of its propaganda magazine, *Dabiq*, is taken from the name of the Syrian city where the final battle is prophesied to occur between the infidels and the armies of *Allah.* IS captured this symbolically important city in June 2014 and beheaded an American "crusader," Peter Kassig (Gambhir, 2014).

The campaign against IS has been long and bloody, but the multinational coalition has made progress. The group lost Kobane to Kurdish forces and Diyala to the Iraqi military in January 2015. A year later, IS lost Ramadi only 8 months after gaining control of the city. In March 2016, Syrian forces (backed by Russian air strikes) recaptured Palmyra (although IS took it back again in December).

In October 2016, IS lost control of Dabiq. In July 2017, Mosul was declared "liberated" by pro-government forces. If it weren't for the ongoing offensive against IS, I'd be inclined to believe that the group intentionally

gave up Dabiq to draw in as many enemy combatants as possible. The open flat terrain surrounding the town is conducive to the very tactics IS has become known for. Given the ongoing assaults against the group, however, it's likely that Baghdadi is concentrating on these locations for now. However, I wouldn't be surprised to see IS active near Dabiq in the future just as it returned to Palmyra less than a year after Syrian forces drove it out.

Is Islamic State a Terrorist Organization?

Today, IS is the most widely publicized "terrorist organization" in the world. Of course, the term itself is a misnomer as any actor can engage in terrorism. What most people don't realize is that IS is actually a hybrid organization. IS is first and foremost a state, controlling territory that in 2015 stretched approximately 375 miles. Baghdadi has since seen his empire slowly diminishing from approximately 30,000 square miles in January 2016 to roughly 23,000 square miles a year later.

While the actual territory under the group's control changes with the fortunes of war, at its height, IS directly governed and taxed an estimated 2–10 million people. Because it's so difficult to collect accurate data inside IS-controlled territory, most analysts shoot for the middle and guestimate the number to be between five and six million.

It's equally impossible to know the value of the organization's assets with 100% certainty. However, it's believed that IS once possessed a war chest of approximately $2 billion (McCants, 2015). What's more, the group continues to rake in millions every day in taxes; gas and oil revenues; ransom and extortion; black market enterprises (antiquities, art, and slaves); and the sale of other commodities such as cement, phosphate, and agriculture.

Second, IS is an insurgent group capable of launching rebellions in dozens of locations. As of December 2015, IS had enlisted 43 affiliates.[7] With the group's financial assets and global brand, IS can technically move operatives as needed or desired. However, there is considerable doubt concerning the extent of actual cooperation between IS and its so-called affiliates. While al-Qaeda has been selective in the groups that it extends the hand of franchise to, IS doesn't seem to be selective at all. And while

there's plenty of evidence that al-Qaeda oversees its affiliate groups rather closely, with the exception of Libya, IS doesn't appear to offer any assistance or oversight to its affiliates (Kadercan, 2015).

Finally, the group is most popularly known as a "terrorist organization." I argue here that, while IS certainly employs violence to achieve its goals, it employs violence primarily to defend and expand its own state apparatus rather than to coerce another regime to change its policies. In this respect, it's no different than any other state that employs violence.

Calculated Madness

We've compared and contrasted the ideological underpinnings of al-Qaeda and IS. In addition to the basic understanding that al-Qaeda is primarily a *jihadist* organization and IS is a *takfiri* group, we noted a number of other important qualities. We traced the influence of Azzam by demonstrating that al-Qaeda adopted both defensive and offensive forms of militant *jihad*, as well as the concept that universal *jihad* was a personal duty (evident in bin Laden's 1998 fatwa). We also traced the influence of ibn Taymiyyah and al-Wahhab as demonstrated in bin Laden's pronouncement of *takfir* upon the house of Saud.

Like Qutb, bin Laden and Zawahiri embraced the vision of a vanguard and the necessity of the use of military force to establish a Muslim state. However, we can also trace the influence of al-Banna and the moderates in the Muslim Brotherhood, as bin Laden and Zawahiri were concerned with educating the Muslim community and preserving popular opinion. Finally, we demonstrated that al-Qaeda clearly broke with the Muslim Brotherhood's strategy of attacking the near enemy. We attributed this decision to the influence of Azzam and also the failure to overthrow the near enemy due to support from the West.

The ideology of IS differs from al-Qaeda in several important ways. First, Zarqawi wanted to set up the *caliphate* immediately. In order to be legitimate, IS needs territory. They also need someone qualified to be *caliph*. Al-Qaeda didn't need either of these (which makes one wonder how IS will fare once Baghdadi is taken out of the picture).

While both bin Laden and Baghdadi can be considered vanguards in their own right, they're vanguards in a very different sense of the word. Bin

Laden led a diffuse global network. Baghdadi claims to preside over a state…perhaps even an empire. Second, rather than attempting to win the hearts and minds of the majority of Muslims as bin Laden wanted to do, Baghdadi is waging a brutal campaign to instill fear, not win popular support. Finally, IS claims to be the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy — Allah's kingdom on earth. As such, it has no room for infidels (Christians, Jews, *Shi'ites*, or apostates of any kind). The *Kharajites*' famous cry, "No government but God's!" can still be heard echoing in the aftermath of IS attacks today.

In Chapter 3, we introduce the framework of strategic terrorism. The chapter explains the utility of strategic terrorism and applies the framework to al-Qaeda and IS.

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[1]Mujahidin (sometimes transliterated as mujahideen) is plural for mujahid, meaning one who struggles.

[2]It does fit Islamic State's strategy, however, as is demonstrated by the group's frequent targeting of Muslims (see next section).

[3]*Shia* Muslims observe practices that are considered *bid'a* (innovation), and therefore, Zarqawi considered them all to be apostates.

[4]It is also possible that Zarqawi and bin Laden first met in Kandahar (Fishman, 2006; Teslik, 2006).

[5]See also Fishman (2006) who refers to Abu Hamzah al-Baghdadi, chief of Zarqawi's *sharia* committee, and the book he posted online reiterating Zarqawi's views. "Why Do We Fight, and Whom Do We Fight?" June 2005, http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums. The post is no longer available.

[6]For example, the group released video footage of the beheading of Americans, Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong, and Ken Bigley, a Brit.

[7]Al-I'tisam of the Quran and Sunnah [Sudan] — 1 August 2014, Abu Sayyaf Group [Philippines] — 25 June 2014, Ansar al-Khilafah [Philippines] — 14 August 2014, Ansar al-Tawhid in India [India] — 4 October 2014, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) [Phillippines] — 13 August 2014, Bangsmoro Justice Movement (BJM) [Phillippines] — 11 September 2014, Jemaah Islamiyah [Philippines] — 27 April 2015, al-Huda Battalion in Maghreb of Islam [Algeria] — 30 June 2014, The Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria [Algeria] — 30 September 2014, al-Ghurabaa [Algeria] — 7 July 2015, Djamaat Houmat ad-Da'wa as-Salafiya (DHDS) [Algeria] — 19 September 2015, al-Ansar Battalion [Algeria] — 4 September 2015, Jundullah [Pakistan] — 17 November 2014, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) [Pakistan/Uzbekistan] — 31 July 2015, Tehreek-e-Khilafat [Pakistan] — 9 July 2014, Leaders of the Mujahid in Khorasan [Pakistan] — 10 January 2015, Islamic Youth Shura Council [Libya] — 22 June 2014, Jaish al-Sahabah in the Levant [Syria] — 1 July 2014, Martyrs of al-Yarmouk Brigade [Syria] — December 2014, Faction of Katibat al-Imam Bukhari [Syria] — 29 October 2014, Jamaat Ansar Bait al-Maqdis [Egypt] — 30 June 2014, Jund al-Khilafah in Egypt [Egypt] — 23 September 2014, Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna in Baalbek [Lebanon] — 30 June 2014, Islamic State Libya (Darnah) [Libya] — 9 November 2014, Lions of Libya [Libya] — 24 September 2014, Shura Council of Shabab al-Islam Darnah [Libya] — 6 October 2014, Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) [Indonesia] — August 2014, Mujahidin Indonesia Timor (MIT) [Indonesia]

— 1 July 2014, Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSCJ) [Egypt] — 1 October 2014, Okba ibn Nafaa Battalion [Tunisia] — 20 September 2014, Jund al-Khilafah in Tunisia [Tunisia] — 31 March 2015, Central Sector of Kabardino-Balakria of the Caucasus Emirate (CE) [Russia] — 26 April 2015, Mujahidin of Tunisia of Kairouan [Tunisia] — 18 May 2015, Mujahidin of Yemen [Yemen] — 10 November 2014, Supporters for the Islamic State in Yemen [Yemen] — 4 September 2014, al-Tawheed Brigade in Khorasan [Afghanistan] — 23 September 2014, Heroes of Islam Brigade in Khorasan [Afghanistan] — 30 September 2014, Supporters of the Islamic State in the Land of the Two Holy Mosques [Saudi Arabia] — 2 December 2014, Ansar al-Islam [Iraq] — 8 January 2015, Boko Haram [Nigeria] — 7 March 2015, The Nokhchico Wilayat of the Caucasus Emirate (CE) [Russia] — 15 June 2015, al-Ansar Battalion [Algeria] — 4 September 2015, al-Shabaab Juba Region Cell Bashir Abu Numan [Somalia] — 7 December 2015.

Chapter 3

Strategic Terrorism

Everything in strategy is very simple,
but that does not mean that everything is very easy.

— Clausewitz

Waterloo

Clausewitz was more than a just brilliant strategist. He was also a soldier and a patriot. As such, he was committed to the defeat of Napoléon and his allies. Without a clear understanding of his strategic objective, one might easily label Clausewitz a traitor (or perhaps even a "terrorist"). He actually left the Prussian Army in 1812 in protest of the Franco-Prussian Treaty that forced Prussia to provide 20,000 troops to Napoléon's Grande Armée. Clausewitz joined the Russian–German Legion and actually fought against his own countrymen on the side of the Russians.

Even after the Franco-Prussian Treaty was dissolved in 1815 and the Russian–German Legion was integrated into the Prussian Army, Clausewitz's strategic objective remained unchanged. He was still committed to defeating Napoléon. Although Clausewitz's unit didn't fight at Waterloo, it did engage French troops at Wavre and successfully prevented reinforcements from reaching Waterloo — thus securing Napoléon's defeat.

To the best of my knowledge, Clausewitz was never labeled a "terrorist," but several modern freedom fighters were (e.g., Nelson Mandela, Menachem Begin, Yasser Arafat, and Sean McBride). What's my point?

Throughout this book, we've emphasized the fact that terrorism can only be distinguished by the strategic objective of the actor and not by the violence itself, the actor, or the actor's ideology. In other words, you can't just "know terrorism when you see it." All violence is not terrorism. Neither is all Islamic extremism terrorism. We need to understand the actor's strategic objective in order to distinguish terrorism from other acts of violence.

This definition of terrorism based upon the strategic objective of the actor gives us a clear understanding of the basic difference between terrorism and other types of violence such as hate crimes, random acts of violence, or insurgencies. But still, the difference is not always as straightforward as it may seem as organizations often go through a number of transitions. For some, both their ideology and tactical operations change. For others, even their strategic goals change.

There's yet another difficulty involved. Just as all violence is not terrorism, the opposite is also true. Not all actors that employ terrorism rely solely upon violence to obtain their strategic objectives. Many organizations also provide public goods and charitable services (in addition to random bouts of calculated madness). Just because an organization runs schools or hospitals (or even a state) doesn't mean it's *not* a "terrorist organization." The good news is while it may be impossible to simply know terrorism when you see it, it is possible to know terrorism when you don't.

What is Strategic Terrorism?

Strategic terrorism is the attempt to obtain political concessions through the use of violence alone rather than through a combination of violence and some other means (Neumann and Smith, 2005). Therefore, while our definition of terrorism allows us to determine whether an actor is engaged in terrorism or some other type of violence, the framework of strategic terrorism focuses on the actor's tactics.

Why analyze an organization through the lens of strategic terrorism rather than via one of the many other theoretical models commonly employed by terrorism scholars? Put simply, it works. In other words, it produces real answers rather than just findings that require "additional study."

Strategic terrorism is solely reliant upon violence to achieve its political ends. The framework involves three stages: (1) disorientation, (2) target response, and (3) gaining legitimacy (Ibid.).

In the first stage, an actor tries to erode the security of the people in order to make the government look incapable of maintaining order and stability. This is typically attempted through a series of random violent attacks. The primary focus of this stage is disorientation, not winning hearts and minds. Therefore, rational actors face a dilemma. They must make the violence threatening enough and destabilizing enough to render the general public open to accepting the political concessions demanded without tipping the scales of public opinion against the perpetrators of the violence.

In the second stage, an actor attempts to provoke a reaction from the target. There are four potential responses (Berry, 1987). First, a target could potentially overreact by engaging in extralegal responses and thereby discrediting its own legitimacy. Alternatively, a target could impose a number of security features which ultimately inconvenience the public enough to lose popular support.

Another possible reaction is that the target fails to react sufficiently to demonstrate that it's capable of dealing with the threat. This is a common problem for regimes that attempt to balance the need to maintain security with principles of civil liberty and basic human rights. By deliberately attempting not to overreact, the target errs on the side of caution. This reaction is commonly referred to as "power deflation" (Ibid., p.10).

A third potential reaction is that a target attempts to crush moderate opposition for fear that they may form a coalition with the extremists. Unless totally successful, the target risks radicalizing the moderate opposition rather than eliminating them. This is largely what we saw happen in Syria.

Finally, the fourth potential reaction is for the target to appease the moderates among the opposition with political reform in an attempt to isolate and weaken the extremist faction. There are a number of risks involved in this option: (1) Reform may be viewed as weakness on the part of the target government and could invite more terrorist violence, and/or (2) traditional supporters of the target government will interpret such concessions as appeasing the terrorists, which could diminish political support for the regime.

In the third and final stage of strategic terrorism, an actor attempts to gain legitimacy through either extensive media coverage or through grassroots methods of mobilizing public support. The third stage is critical in tipping public approval in favor of the perpetrators, and it has been employed by many organizations such as Hamas and others that have not only created legitimate political parties but also hospitals, schools, and various other charitable organizations. However, Neumann and Smith argue that such grassroots methods defy the defining tenet of strategic terrorism: namely that terrorist violence alone can bring about the political changes desired (Neumann and Smith, 2005). Therefore, they propose that strategic terrorism is "a potentially flawed strategy, which — except in the most favorable circumstances — is unlikely to achieve the political ends for which it is used" (Neumann and Smith, 2007, p. 10). The most favorable circumstance is one of foreign occupation as foreign authorities generally lack legitimacy in the eyes of the population they control (Ibid.).[1]

Strategic terrorism is based upon two main assumptions: (1) a target government's resolve can be eroded by persistent terrorist violence, and (2) terrorist violence will create sufficient fear within the target population to undermine its trust in the government's ability (or desire) to protect its citizens.

The first assumption is based largely upon the success of terrorist campaigns to drive out colonial occupiers such as the British in Palestine in the 1940s. However, while foreign occupation by colonial powers represents the most favorable circumstance for strategic terrorism, it remains to be seen whether strategic terrorism can be as successful in less favorable circumstances.

As Clausewitz famously put it, war is the "continuation of politics by other means." If a target government is already enjoying a measure of legitimacy, and its desire is to protect that legitimacy as well as its citizens, it has a wide range of policy choices at its disposal.

The second assumption of strategic terrorism has a number of caveats. The first is that the campaign of violence could possibly backfire and generate support for the target government rather than undermine it. A second caveat is that, rather than creating a destabilizing atmosphere of panic and fear, a campaign of protracted violence may become normalized. The people may simply accept it as a part of their daily lives.

I recall a conversation that I had with a Serbian man who was a young boy in Bosnia in the early 1990s. He told me that the war became so commonplace that when he would ask his mother if he could go outside and play, she would reply, “Watch out for the snipers!” (Nišić, 2010).

Beyond simply normalizing violence, societies may even learn to capitalize on it (Keen, 1997; Kaldor, 2013). In Somalia and South Sudan for example, warlords profit from the violence. And since many individuals are employed by the warlords, irregular warfare has become an economic opportunity (Menkhaus, 2004a; Bakonyi and Stuvøy, 2005).

To instill (and maintain) the necessary fear and climate of insecurity, terrorist violence needs to be “sudden, brutal, unpredictable, and indiscriminate” (Neumann and Smith, 2005, p. 588). However, maintaining violence of this magnitude poses a number of challenges. The first is the sheer difficulty of orchestrating repeated attacks and evading the authorities. A high degree of technical ability, accessibility, personnel and financial support are necessary, not to mention dedication and personal resolve among the members.

The second challenge involves balancing the need to shock and awe the public into a state of fear and instability without turning the tide of public opinion against the group and increasing support for the target government. Finally, while the group seeks to provoke a reaction from the target government, it risks annihilation should the regime elect to react with overwhelming force.

The need to provoke a target government into sufficiently reacting without overreacting requires a group to engage in a number of carefully calculated chess moves: How much violence is a target government willing to withstand? How will political supporters react? How much domestic and political support can the regime expect should they elect to overreact? What options are available to the group should the target government decide to escalate its own counterterrorist campaign? Can the organization alter its strategy? Is the group willing to compromise? How might the organization’s supporters react if it did? Navigating this mine-field of decisions is difficult at best and most likely impossible.

Most religious groups that employ strategic terrorism are not willing to compromise. Therefore, one of two options is probable: (1) the group will either fail to sufficiently escalate the violence to the necessary level to provoke a reaction; or (2) if it’s successful in provoking a reaction, the

group will lose the support of the people, disintegrate into splinter factions, and/or be annihilated by the target government (Ibid.).

The likelihood that it will succeed in provoking just the right response so as to cost the target government a sufficient measure of legitimacy and also garner a measure of legitimacy for itself is highly unlikely. In fact, it's precisely this limited efficacy of strategic terrorism that explains why so many groups choose to employ other tactics in addition to political violence to achieve their goals.

In the remainder of this chapter, we'll analyze al-Qaeda and IS by (1) applying our definition of terrorism and (2) applying the framework of strategic terrorism. The first step will inform us as to whether each organization employs terrorism or some other form of political violence. In other words, *what* is each group's strategic objective? The second step will inform us regarding each group's tactics. In other words, *how* is each actor attempting to achieve its goals? In the chapters that follow, we'll conduct a similar analysis of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

A component of this analysis is the theory of perception of the other (Garfinkel, 1952).[2] Perception plays a huge role in both the decision to engage in terrorist violence and in the way that target governments respond (Laqueur, 1977; Crenshaw, 1981; Berry, 1986).

Following the Bread Crumbs

Strategy is the use of one's resources toward the attainment of one's goals. Therefore, how an actor perceives its own resources vis-à-vis the resources of another plays as large a role as the strategic goal itself. Furthermore, because three out of the four organizations that we examine have adopted the *takfiri* doctrine, which dramatically affects their tactical operations, perception of the other is indispensable for understanding how to interpret these groups' actions as a means for obtaining their respective goals.

According to our definition of terrorism, given al-Qaeda's chosen strategy of driving out the far enemy, it necessarily must be attempting to coerce political concessions. In contrast, IS does not launch attacks to coerce political concessions from a target government, therefore, IS doesn't employ terrorism to achieve its strategic goals. Rather, it seeks to protect and defend its interests as a state. As such, it targets military enemies.

However, IS also professes to be the Islamic *caliphate*, and as such, its interests are highly ideological. Either Baghdadi is a true believer himself or he's a master propagandist. Either way, as the self-proclaimed defender of Islam, IS primarily targets apostates — especially *Shia*.

I realize that this is a highly controversial position. Many would argue that IS does employ terrorism. I disagree. As an analytical exercise, we can consider the attack on Atatürk Airport (the third attack in Istanbul in 2016). It has been suggested that the attack was an attempt by IS to coerce Turkey to abandon its secular leanings, or to stop cozying up to NATO, or as retaliation for recent attempts to crack down on IS operations inside Turkey.

First of all, there's no conclusive evidence one way or the other that IS was behind the attack in the first place. It could have just as likely been Kurdish separatists or some other actor for that matter — especially given the attempted coup on 15 July 2016. There are certainly more than enough other actors in the region. Since strategic theory doesn't focus on the actor itself but rather on the actor's strategic objective, we shouldn't rule anyone out — not even the government.

Second, it's *possible* that IS orchestrated the attack. It's conceivable that IS has begun to change its tactics due to recent military defeats. However, tactics are dictated by strategy, and one would hope that they make sense.

To argue that IS attacked Atatürk Airport to coerce Erdoğan to become more Islamic doesn't fit Baghdadi's (MO) — IS kills those it views as apostates, it doesn't threaten them. Furthermore, Erdoğan has repeatedly defended Turkey's right to be Muslim regardless of its secular constitution or its efforts to join the EU.

What's more, to suggest that Erdoğan is too close to NATO is problematic if we believe that former NATO commander, John Campbell, was behind the attempted coup. The proposition is even more problematic since Erdoğan withdrew Turkey from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights — which bans executions.

Finally, retaliation is an act of war or counterterrorism — not terror. Target governments retaliate. So to suggest that IS attacked Atatürk Airport out of retaliation is to convey statehood and imply a legitimate right rather than terrorism.

To further demonstrate that IS does not engage in terrorism by definition or by strategy, we can employ the framework of strategic terrorism. When we apply the three stages of strategic terrorism (1)

disorientation, (2) target response, and (3) gaining legitimacy, we see that al-Qaeda qualifies but IS does not.

Regarding the first stage, 9/11 was a classic example of an attempt to disorient the public. However, the attacks clearly tipped the scales of American public opinion against al-Qaeda. We could argue from the information extracted off the computers Alan Cullison purchased that this was one of the intentions behind the attacks. We can further infer from bin Laden's concern over Zarqawi's excessive violence that he was interested in not tipping the scales of Muslim public opinion against the organization.

We have no such breadcrumbs to follow when it comes to IS. IS neither attempts to coerce political concessions nor does it utilize violence to disorient the public into accepting policy concessions made by a target government. IS wages war against those it perceives to be its enemies. While the group does use terror to disorient its enemies (as when it posts pictures of decapitated bodies on social media), the strategy is to demoralize and dishearten enemy combatants to weaken them so that they're easier to defeat, not to negotiate a compromise.

Concerning the second stage of strategic terrorism, we just established that al-Qaeda clearly attempted to provoke a response from the U.S. IS, on the other hand, has not attempted to provoke such a reaction from a target government in order to discredit it. While IS regularly makes use of asymmetric tactics when necessary (suicide bombers, etc.), it also employs conventional military tactics as well. The goal is to defeat its enemies — not to provoke a reaction.

In the third stage of strategic terrorism, an actor attempts to gain legitimacy by employing some other means of attaining its goal. Interestingly enough, this is where the tables *appear* to turn somewhat. Other than the businesses bin Laden launched in Sudan, al-Qaeda has made very little attempt to involve itself directly in the everyday needs of the community. Sure, it uses social media to spread its message, and it sponsors *jihadist* groups in 60 or so countries, but a terror network is not the same as a network of schools or hospitals. Still, al-Qaeda has demonstrated a concern for winning hearts and minds and its social media campaigns are geared toward that end.

The exact opposite is true of IS. Because IS operates as a state — and because of the group's highly developed media arm — it would appear at face value that IS does not rely solely on violence to achieve its strategic

objectives. However, when we consider the group's primary objectives we see a different pattern emerging.

IS claims to be the *caliphate* and Baghdadi the *caliph*. The first duty of the *caliph* is to spread Islam whether through peace or through violence. Because it's a *takfiri* group, IS has no intention of winning hearts and minds. In the mind of Baghdadi and his followers, they're the true believers and anyone who doesn't follow them are apostates.

This perception on the part of Baghdadi and his followers is key to understanding the group's strategic objectives. One might think that any group looking to build a religious movement such as the re-establishment of the *caliphate* would seek to win favor with as broad a constituency as possible. However, this is not Baghdadi's approach at all.

Yes, the group provides public goods. Inside the *caliphate*, IS subsidizes bread, offers free health services and education, enforces the law, and even directs traffic (Kadercan, 2015). But these services are a matter of everyday operations — they're not intended to gain legitimacy. The group makes no attempt to gain legitimacy in the eyes of non-believers. Apostates are brutally murdered without hesitation, whether inside the *caliphate* or out.

The violence is intended to spread fear, of course. And it has instilled fear. Entire armies have dropped their weapons and fled out of sheer terror of the group's brutality. But the violence was never intended to gain legitimacy for the group. Rather, IS primarily uses violence to send a message to those who already accept it as the *caliphate* — to demonstrate that it's paving the way for the *Mahdi*.

We can make a similar argument regarding the group's media campaign. It's not intended to win hearts and minds or legitimacy in the eyes of non-believers. Rather, it's main purpose is to mobilize the true believers (i.e., those who already accept the legitimacy of IS) to prepare for the coming of the *Mahdi*.

This distinction between the attempt to gain legitimacy and the effort to manage daily affairs and mobilize followers hinges upon our understanding of the group's perception of the other. The group perceives those who accept its legitimacy to be true believers, and it welcomes them into the fold. However, IS makes no effort to gain legitimacy in the eyes of non-believers. Those who do not accept the group's legitimacy are perceived as apostates who therefore must be eliminated to prepare the way for the *Mahdi*.

This perception of the other is also a vitally important point to consider when attempting to unpack the strategic objectives of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram which have also adopted the *takfiri* doctrine under the leadership of Godane and Shekau respectively.

Vanguards

In this chapter, we introduced the framework of strategic terrorism and demonstrated that it applies to al-Qaeda but not to IS. While both bin Laden and Baghdadi can be considered vanguards in their own right, they're vanguards in a very different sense of the word. Bin Laden led a diffuse global network. Baghdadi claims to preside over a state — perhaps even an empire. Second, rather than attempt to win the hearts and minds of the majority of Muslims as bin Laden wanted to do, Baghdadi is waging a brutal campaign to instill fear — not win popular support.

In the remainder of the book, we'll consider two of the deadliest militant organizations on the continent of Africa: al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

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[1]See also Crozier (1960) who argues that terrorist violence in general is most likely to succeed during conditions of foreign occupation.

[2]Please see Merleau-Ponty (1973), Abdallah-Pretceille (1983), Kornprobst (2002), Castano *et al*. (2003), Crozier (1998), and Millas (2004).

Chapter 4

Somalia: The Teeth of a Lion

A cat in her house has the teeth of a lion…

— Somali Proverb

Wiil Waal

There is a Somali Folktale about a sultan named Wiil Waal who commanded all of his subjects to bring him the part of a sheep that best unites or divides people. The one who chose best would be honored as the wisest man in the realm.

While nearly all of Wiil Waal's subjects selected the choicest parts of the lamb, there was a poor man who could not afford to give such a precious gift. He was afraid to go before the sultan empty-handed, so he asked his eldest daughter what to do. She was very wise, and she told her father to give the sultan the gullet (the part that connects the throat to the stomach).

"But that's the part that's always thrown away," the man objected. "Surely the sultan will be insulted if I bring such a gift."

"Trust me, father," the wise daughter insisted. "Soon you will be honored as the wisest man in the realm."

The next day, the poor man brought his gift to the sultan. Looking around, he saw all the other gifts: choice cuts from the best parts of the lamb, and he trembled in fear.

When the sultan saw the poor man's gift he commended him. "Surely you are a very wise man."

“Me? A wise man?” The poor farmer stammered in confusion.

Realizing that the farmer had not chosen the gullet himself, he asked him, “Who told you to give me the gullet?”

“My eldest daughter. She is very wise.”

“Take me to her,” the sultan requested.

The entire company followed as the poor farmer led the sultan to his home. Upon seeing the man’s daughter, the sultan questioned her regarding the gullet.

“I told my father to give you the gullet because it is truly a symbol of what unites or divides us. When people share they become friends, but when they do not share they become enemies. The gullet delivers shared food to an empty stomach. When it is full, people are united. But when it is empty, people are divided.”

“I have found my wise man,” the sultan rejoiced. “One day she will rule the land.”

And so it was.

By and *Bay’ah*

Because the strategic goals of al-Shabaab cannot be fully understood without a minimal knowledge of the region’s colonial and modern history, this chapter begins by discussing the history of Somalia and exploring how the Somali population became so fragmented. Second, we examine the various groups that have appeared in Somalia since independence and analyze their various strategic objectives in an effort to identify any continuity between them.

In the previous chapter, we established that al-Qaeda engages in strategic terrorism while IS does not engage in terrorism at all. Therefore, while the two organizations may appear to be similar, they have polar opposite strategies for achieving their strategic objectives.

While common knowledge regarding al-Qaeda and IS is fairly widespread (if not always accurate), most have only heard of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram because of the media coverage of their more infamous attacks (the Westgate Shopping Centre and the Chibok schoolgirl kidnappings). More in-depth knowledge concerning these two organizations is largely lacking among the general public.[1]

However, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are two of the deadliest organizations in Africa. In fact, in November 2015, Boko Haram surpassed IS as the deadliest "terrorist" organization in the world (Searcey and Santora, 2015).

Given that al-Shabaab has pledged *bay'ah* (allegiance) to al-Qaeda under the leadership of Godane — and then again under Godane's successor, Abu Ubaidah — it's important to assess the nature of this alliance and determine whether it has any impact on either the group's strategic objectives or its tactical operations. In Chapter 5, we'll identify al-Shabaab's theoretical underpinnings, trace any influences the group may have adopted from its predecessors, and explore the practical implications of these influences on the group's strategic goals and tactical use of violence. However, for now we'll focus on the more immediate context.

History of Somalia

Today, there are six political entities in the Horn of Africa with substantial Somali populations. The first is the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). The second is Puntland, an autonomous state which officially recognizes the authority of the FGS but establishes its own policy. The third is Somaliland, an autonomous region of Somalia which has enjoyed relative peace and stable governance and seeks independence. The fourth is the Republic of Djibouti. The fifth is the Somali National Regional State — one of the eight regions of Ethiopia — and the sixth is the Northeastern Province of Kenya (Møller, 2009).

While all Somalis are believed to have derived from one ancestral tribe, Somalia is further divided into clans and sub-clans. There are four main clan families. These are sometimes listed as the Hawiye, Darood, Dir, and Isaaq (Lewis, 1980). At other times, they're listed as the Darood, Hawiye, Digil-Mirifle, and Dir (Menkhaus, 2000a).

Joakim Gundel elaborates on the discrepancy by clarifying that the "perceived" majority clans are "the Darood, Hawiye, Dir, and — depending on one's perspective — the Isaaq." These clans (otherwise known as the "noble clans") comprise the nomadic-pastoralist clans that speak Af-Maxaatiri which became the official language of Somalia following independence. The other large group is the Digil-Mirifle (also called the

Rahanweyn) which is comprised of mainly farmers who live in southern Somalia and speak AfMaay-tiri (Gundel, 2009, p. 11).

Beyond that, there are a multitude of various sub-clans and *diya* groups that, heretofore, have remained stubbornly independent of one another (Grossman, 2007). *Diya* groups are most popularly known as blood compensation pacts in which groups ranging from a few hundred to a thousand or more enter into contract to avenge the death of a member or his loved ones. However, *diya* groups are also local insurance arrangements that usually exist at the village level or lower. Members of *diya* groups provide support for each other in times of drought, famine, or other such crises. Members also protect one another's property from other *diya* groups via the threat of retaliation from the entire group.[2]

The area that now comprises Somalia and Ethiopia has been plagued with expansionist conflict for centuries. The two powers vied for control of the borderlands between them while outside powers also wrestled for influence and resources. Religious differences played a role in the fighting as well. While the Somali territories were largely controlled by *emirs* and Islamic elites, the predecessor of modern-day Ethiopia was the Abyssinian Christian Empire.

Pre-colonial History

For centuries leading up to the 15th century, peace prevailed in the region between Muslims and Christian Abyssinia. Tradition attributes this peace to the gratitude of the Prophet Muhammad who blessed the Abyssinians for their hospitality and protection of his early followers who fled to Ethiopia to escape persecution in Mecca at the hands of his own tribesmen — the Quraysh. Muhammad is said to have forbidden his followers from waging *jihad* against the Ethiopian emperor and his people. Therefore, while Muslim conquest ensued against the empires of Persia and Byzantium, the Muslim forces lived in peace with Christian Ethiopia for nearly a millennium (Budge, 2014).

Friendly relations began to deteriorate when Emperor Yeshaq (1414–1429) declared Muslims to be "enemies of the Lord" and launched sporadic attacks against vulnerable Muslim settlements. An all-out state of war erupted when Yeshaq's armies invaded the sultanate of Ifat in 1415, killed

King Sa'ad al-Din, and demanded tribute. Yeshaq also commissioned a hymn to commemorate his victory in which the word "Somali" first appears in written history (Trimingham, 1952).

By the 16th century, the Muslim/Christian divide was already well-pronounced. The Abyssinian–Adal War (1529–1543) cemented the animosity that would persist unto the present day. With the aid of the Ottomans, the Somali *imam*, Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (also known as Ahmed Guray in Somali which means "Ahmed the left-handed"), captured nearly three quarters of the Abyssinian Kingdom in what came to be known as the "Conquest of Abyssinia." Al-Ghazi might well have taken the entire kingdom had the Portuguese not intervened (Desplat, 2005; Solomon 2015).

Somalia's Colonial History

Once Britain established colonial ties with India, it sought the most economic ocean route available to transport raw materials and goods. The Suez Canal, which opened in 1869, allowed Britain to significantly reduce the distance between India and Britain by traveling via the Red Sea rather than around Africa. In 1884, the Berlin Conference triggered the infamous "scramble for Africa" in which Britain and other European states laid claim to the continent. Somalia was colonized by four imperial powers: Ethiopia, Great Britain, France, and Italy. Ethiopia claimed the Ogaden region; Great Britain carved out the area that became the protectorate of British Somaliland; Italy occupied the South (Italian Somaliland); and France colonized the region that is now Djibouti. The result was disunity, division, and endless war (Martin, 2006).

By the late 19th century, the British and Italians had gained commercial rights through a series of trade agreements and established the respective protectorates of British and Italian Somaliland (Cassanelli, 1982). Both powers viewed the expanding Ethiopian Empire as a direct threat to their own territorial claims. The Ethiopian victory over the Italians at Adwa in 1896 further confirmed their fears.

For the next 30 years or so, localized border conflicts sprung up here and there between both Ethiopia and the colonial powers — and among the colonial powers themselves. One such clash led to the Italian invasion of

Ethiopia and the annexation of the Ethiopian Empire in 1935–1936 (Barnes, 2007).

Somali resistance against foreign incursions was also fierce. One of the more successful resistance movements of the early 20th century was led by Sayid Muhammad Abdullah Hassan, who established the Dervish state and successfully resisted British and Italian expansion by enlisting the aid of Somali soldiers from across the Horn of Africa to wage *jihad* against the Christian invaders. The Dervish state maintained its independence until 1920 when it was finally defeated by the British (Laitin, 1979; Harper, 2012).

The British also forced the Italians out of Ethiopia during WW II and afterward retained control of both British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland as protectorates. Ethiopia itself was designated as Occupied Enemy Territory, which was problematic given that the British had allowed the exiled Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Sellasie, to return with limited powers.

The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement allowed Ethiopia to become a sovereign state but left certain areas under British control. Among these areas were the Haud (an important Somali grazing land in the Northeast along the border between Ethiopia and Somalia) and the Ogaden (a Southeastern border region which is mostly comprised of ethnic Somalis) (Ullendorff and Beckingham, 1964).

In 1945, the UN granted Italy trusteeship over Italian Somaliland on the condition that it agreed to Somali independence within 10 years. In 1948, Britain returned the Haud and the Ogaden to Ethiopia — a move which would exacerbate tense border relations between Ethiopia and the soon to be independent Somali state for decades to come (Barnes, 2007).

From Independence to the Islamic Union

British Somaliland gained its independence on 26 June 1960 — taking upon itself the new name — the State of Somaliland. The former Italian Somaliland (known as the Trust Territory of Somalia) gained independence 5 days later. The two newly independent states united and formed the Somalia Republic on 1 July 1960 (Poore, 2009).

The new state's border problems increased when the British granted the largely Somali-populated Northern Frontier District of Kenya to the

Republic of Kenya in 1963. The year 1963 also marked continued border conflict in the Ogaden with the Nasrullah Uprising — a struggle between Somali nationalists and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF).

In Arabic, Nasrullah means "sacrifice for the sake of Allah" (Abdullahi, 2007b). While Somalia's border conflicts with Ethiopia and Kenya are often framed in religious terms, they're fundamentally nationalist at the core — and the Somali government would soon prove itself to be anything but Islamic (Markakis, 1987).

On 15 October 1969, President Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards. Six days later, Major General Mohammad Siad Barre led a coup and seized power (Walls, 2008). He renamed the country the Somalia Democratic Republic. Barre, who headed the Supreme Revolutionary Council, envisioned Somalia as a secular, socialist state. Unsurprisingly, the Barre government leaned heavily toward the Soviet Union (Ahmed, 2006).

Interest in Somalia increased considerably as a response to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo of the 1970s. In addition to its strategic location near oil shipping lanes, Somalia is believed to have significant oil reserves of its own. Four American oil companies (Conoco, Amoco, Phillips, and Chevron) secured exploration rights with the Barre regime.

The military expanded from 5,000 troops in 1960 to 65,000 troops in 1990. Between 1961 and 1979, Somalia imported $660 million worth of weapons. During the 1980s alone, the government spent $44.5 million annually on the military. This incredible military growth came at the expense of social spending such as education, healthcare, clean water, and food.

The Barre regime had one of the worst human rights records in Africa. During Barre's reign, Somalis ranked among the lowest in the world for per capita caloric intake (Leeson, 2007). Meanwhile, the military accounted for 90% of Somalia's total expenditures (Mubarak, 1997). The United States and the Soviet Union also paid Somalia a great injustice by equipping it with arms and weapons rather than helping it develop its infrastructure, agriculture, industry, and education system.

In 1975 — to further its revolutionary socialist agenda of liberating women and equalizing society — Barre passed the Family Law. This new law allowed women to inherit wealth equally with men, restricted the

practice of polygamy, and allowed women to divorce their husbands. When Somali religious leaders insisted that the law violated Islam, the government put 10 to death and imprisoned or exiled hundreds more (Abdullahi, 2007a).

In 1977, the Barre regime openly supported rebels in the Ogaden Desert along the border between Ethiopia and Somalia — leading to the Ogaden War. Although the Soviet Union had previously supported Barre and the United States had supported Ethiopia, the Soviet Union switched alliances following a Marxist coup in Ethiopia led by Mengistu Haile Mariam — the head of Ethiopia's Derg regime (Zounmenou, 2009). Other communist states such as Cuba, East Germany, North Korea, and The People's Republic of Yemen also sent troops and/or military aid to Ethiopia (Prunier and Gisselquist, 2003).

In an act of Cold War balancing, the United States began to support Somalia (between 1979 and 1991, Somalia received over $800 million in economic and military aid from the United States). In return, Barre provided American ships access to the port of Kismayo in the south and the former Soviet naval base at Berbera in the north. Despite American support, Somalia lost badly. The 8-month war cost Somalia roughly 32,000 troops and nearly all of its heavy military machinery.

Still, the Ogaden conflict was never fully resolved. Conflict over control of the region continues to this day. The primary agents in the fight are the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and ENDF. ONLF claims that rightful control of the Ogaden belongs to Somalis — and it perceives Ethiopia as an occupying force in Somali territory. Meanwhile ENDF is simply defending the status quo (Schraeder, 1992; Abdullahi, 2007b).

Somalia's conflict with Kenya over their poorly secured, 424-mile common border is also an ongoing problem. Somalia never accepted the borders drawn by the British at independence as the Shifta War exemplified (1963–1967). The Somali government backed Somali rebels in the Northern Frontier District against the Kenyan army in their fight to secede from Kenya and become a part of Greater Somalia (Møller, 2009).

As with the Ogaden War, the Shifta War was never fully resolved either. The Somali government signed a ceasefire in 1967, but local clans continue to clash along the border over control of land and resources (Whittaker, 2008). In 1981, the so-called "bandits" (the word "shifta" is used in the Horn sub region to refer to bandits or outlaws) formally became the

Northern Frontier District Liberation Army (NFDLA) and obtained funding from a number of conservative Gulf countries (Ringquist, 2011).

With the exception of a few major incidents such as the 1984 Wagalla Massacre — when Kenyan security forces rounded up approximately 2,000 Somali men and opened fire on them at the Wagalla Airstrip — it's usually left to local clan elders to resolve smaller disputes in the absence of more formal mechanisms (Kerrow, 2010; Menkhaus, 2005).

The Kenyan government has all but ignored the region regarding social services and infrastructure. While there's no official survey data available from the Northern Frontier District, an online article from the region maintains that the Somali inhabitants feel that they're being forced to be Kenyans against their will. The issue is a matter of perception. The NFDLA and native Somalis in the region perceive Kenya as an occupying force on Somaliland, and they want to have a say in who controls their territory (Mburu, 2005).

Ongoing border disputes are only part of the equation, however. A greater source of instability is derived from internal conflict. While clan politics constitutes the lion's share of the fighting, religious differences between moderates and extremists also play a role.

Sufism has traditionally been the predominant form of Islam practiced in Africa (Lewis, 2002). The main differences between *Sufism* and *Salafist* Islam is that the former tends to be more adaptable to social norms and less concerned with a strict interpretation of the *Quran*. In other words, *Sufis* care less about outward observance and more about inner purity, individual spirituality, and growth (Meijer, 2009).

Salafist Islam, on the other hand, stresses a strict interpretation of the *Quran* and demands much more rigid outward conformity to Islamic precepts. *Salafist* teaching often rejects Western culture and advocates both the purification of Islam and the establishment of an Islamic *caliphate* (Gelvin, 2010; Hill, 2010).

Even before Somalia gained its independence, Somalis began travelling to Egypt and to Saudi Arabia to study *Salafi/Wahhabi* Islam. However, those who broke with the dominant *Sufi* beliefs and traditions in Somalia were clearly in the minority — and they enjoyed only limited success in spreading their beliefs among Somalia's *Sufi* majority (Gatsiounis, 2013).

In the 1970s, a large number of Somali men travelled to Saudi Arabia to work in the oil fields. Many of these men returned to Somalia with a strict

Salafist interpretation of Islam that influenced the emergence of two groups in Somalia: the Unity of Islamic Youth (*Wahdat al-Shabaab al-Islamiyya*) and the Islamic Group (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*). In 1982, the two organizations merged to become *al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya* (AIAI), commonly known as the Islamic Union (Møller, 2009; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Shinn, 2011).

From the Islamic Union to the Union of Islamic Courts

AIAI received substantial financial support from Saudi-based charitable organizations, and thus it was heavily influenced by *Salafi/Wahhabi* doctrine. The members of AIAI largely consisted of educated Muslims who had studied in the Middle East and believed that political Islam was the only answer to the problem of the corrupt government in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2004b; Pirio and Gregorian, 2006). Under the leadership of Hassan Dahir Aweys, AIAI's primary goals were to oust the corrupt Barre regime, establish an Islamic government in Somalia, and free the Ogaden region — currently controlled by Ethiopia (ICG, 2002).

Funded by wealthy Saudis and Somali expatriates in Kenya, AIAI gained control of the Gedo region of Somalia and appointed Mohamed Haji Yusuf — a former Somali High Court judge — as leader of the region. Yusuf set up Islamic courts, medical centers, schools, orphanages, and other charitable services in the region. Yusuf also outlawed *qat* — a stimulant that's commonly chewed in the Horn region (Miller, 2004).

Meanwhile, Barre privileged members of his own sub-clan (the Marehan) by granting them access to the best land, water, and government jobs. For example, Barre supported Marehan herders by backing their claim on available water in southern Somalia. Barre also showed favoritism to certain other groups — particularly to the Ogadeni (his mother's sub-clan) and to the Dhulbahante (his son-in-law's sub-clan) — meanwhile intentionally causing divisions among the other various clans and sub-clans to keep them weak.

External funding during the Cold War years allowed the Barre regime to pursue a ruthless strategy pitting one clan against the other. Those clans that were not favored by Barre united in the 1980s to form various opposition

groups such as the Somali Patriotic Movement, the Somali National Movement, and the United Somali Congress (Shay, 2010).

When Cold War support dried up, the Barre regime had too many enemies and too little resources. The losers in Barre's divisive game came back to haunt him, and he eventually became known as the "mayor of Mogadishu" because he had lost control of so much of the rest of the country (Rawson, 1993; Gettleman, 2009).

The proverbial chickens came back to roost, and the Somali Civil War broke out in January 1991. An alliance of clan militias armed with American and Soviet military-grade weapons drove Barre from power. With Barre out of the way, fighting then broke out between the militias themselves as they spewed their venom on each other (Mwangi, 2012). A free for all followed as war profiteers battled over everything of value from shipping ports to parking spots. Overpriced (and often tainted) goods flooded the market as warlords and clan militias taxed shipments by land and sea (Besteman and Cassanelli, 1996).

Egypt co-sponsored a conference in Djibouti in June and July of the same year, in which an interim government was set up with Ali Mahdi Mohamed (a wealthy hotel proprietor from the Abigal sub-clan of the Hawiye clan) named as interim president. General Mohammed Farah Aideed (a warlord from the Habir Gadir sub-clan of the Hawiye clan) rejected the agreement, however, and took control of the Southern part of Mogadishu. Meanwhile, Ali Mahdi retained control of the Northern districts. A green line initially divided the two camps, but the civil war disintegrated even further into all-out clan warfare as clans and sub-clans fought for control over scarce resources (Møller, 2009).

Aideed was not only opposed to his arch-rival assuming the office of the presidency, he harbored deep resentment toward UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who had previously served as Egyptian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and had been a staunch supporter of Barre. Aideed saw the Djibouti conference as a maneuver intended to marginalize him from the circle of powerbrokers in Somalia.

Conditions grew steadily worse. Somaliland seceded in May 1991, and by 1992, there were more than 10 militarized factions controlling various areas of Somalia.[3] These forces, led by competing warlords, fought among themselves for hegemony — killing hundreds of thousands of civilians and displacing nearly one million others (Sommer, 1994).

The civil war posed a serious threat to extensive oil prospecting operations that had been ongoing in Somalia by Conoco, Amoco, Phillips, and Chevron. These American corporations had invested a considerable amount of time and money in Somalia — but the political instability in the region forced three of them to cut their losses. Only Conoco stayed because its local operations director, Raymond Marchand, maintained close ties to Aideed's chief advisor — Osman Ato — who had longstanding ties with American Oil. Marchand rented Conoco's base in Mogadishu from Ato and also converted all of the corporation's currency through his currency exchange company.

The humanitarian crisis that resulted prompted the UN to respond in November 1992 with humanitarian aid and multinational peacekeeping forces to ensure its delivery. The first United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM-I) not only failed to improve conditions in Somalia, but it also most likely made them worse. By attempting to distribute food and aid through the warlords, the UN only empowered them more and further fanned the flames of the insurgents. UNOSOM-I was followed in December 1992 by the U.S.-led United Task Force Somalia (UNITAF) and UNOSOM-II in March 1993 (Boutros-Gali, 1996).

In March 1993, 15 different warring parties signed two separate agreements calling for national reconciliation and disarmament. The first agreement was basically an agreement to reconvene at a future time to discuss national reconciliation. When they reassembled at the Conference on National Reconciliation on 27 March, they signed the Addis Ababa Agreement which outlined the terms of national reconciliation and disarmament. Fighting continued, however, and the agreement was of little effect other than to unite several of the factions together under the leadership of Aideed (AMISOM, 2016).

Although UNITAF (also called Operation Restore Hope) received a UN mandate to establish a safe zone for humanitarian intervention, it was more or less a botched attempt to safeguard private oil interests. While the U.S. originally backed Aideed, it switched sides after one of Aideed's key allies — Omar Jess — lost control of Kismayo. In return, Mahdi offered Conoco exclusive oil rights after the war. Thus, the intervention of 28,000 (mostly American) forces largely turned into a bilateral war between the United States and Aideed's coalition (Samatar, 2010).

The Conoco compound effectively served as the U.S. embassy. Not only did Conoco provide intelligence for the American military, but the company also assisted in planning the logistics for the U.S. marine landing in December 1992. A commander in the operation — Brigadier General Frank Libutti — praised Marchand for his "courageous contributions and selfless service," without which the operation "would have failed." Coincidentally, longtime Washington insider — Richard Armitage (former assistant secretary of defense, deputy secretary of state) — also serves on Conoco's board of directors.

The presence of U.S. troops in Somalia attracted al-Qaeda's attention, and the group dispatched operatives to train Somali militants and fight beside them (Shinn, 2009; Mingst and Kams, 2011). Al-Qaeda operatives fought in the Battle of Mogadishu (and the infamous Black Hawk Down incident) of 3 October 1993 where Somali militants killed 18 U.S. soldiers and paraded their corpses in triumph through the streets of the city (Sangvic, 1998). Al-Qaeda later bragged how the defeat led to the withdrawal of American troops. However, many believe that al-Qaeda exaggerated the extent of its role in the victory (Kohlmann, 2009; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010).

UNOSOM-II was dispatched in March 1993 to take over where UNITAF left off. Meanwhile, the U.S. began to pull out of the fight. The American withdrawal from Somalia was completed by March 1994. Following suit, UN forces began to withdraw as well. The last peacekeepers left in March 1995. After more than 2 years of fighting and substantial casualties, some would argue that the international humanitarian intervention left Somalia in worse condition than it had been in before the peace-keepers arrived (Clarke and Herbst, 1997).

As disastrous as the failed UNOSOM missions turned out to be, one huge benefit resulted. The vast quantities of aid funneled into Somalia in turn required a myriad of local contractors to build infrastructure and telecommunications systems to aid in its disbursement. Somali businessmen began to offer what the government no longer could: schools, healthcare facilities, courier services, and even power plants.

The result was a Somali shilling that was more stable without the central bank than it had been during the last decade of the Barre regime (Menkhaus *et al*., 1995). Despite the involvement of the warlords, this enormous infusion of cash and the creation of legitimate business

opportunities had a ripple effect on the Somali economy which stimulated trade and bolstered the political will for stability and the rule of law.

AIAI had managed to maintain control of the city of Luuq near the borders with Ethiopia and Kenya. The group imposed a strict interpretation of *sharia* and punished violations without mercy. Amputations and stoning were commonplace, but in the absence of another alternative, the people accepted AIAI because life was safer under the *Islamists* than anywhere else in Somalia. However, the Ethiopians soon provided an alternative (Jan, 2000; Dagne, 2010).

Because of AIAI's strategic goal of creating a Greater Somalia, the group focused on liberating the ethnically Somali Ogaden region of Ethiopia. AIAI agitated separatist sentiment in the area and plagued Addis Ababa with a series of assassination attempts and bombings in the mid-1990s. Luuq's close proximity to the Ethiopian border made it both a threat and a convenient target.

Ethiopian troops attacked AIAI's stronghold in Luuq and slaughtered hundreds of AIAI militants. Various clan militias and many Somalis welcomed the Ethiopian victory because they resented the imposition of *Salafist* ideology and the presence of AIAI militants from other clans. The group decided to alter course and change its operational approach. Rather than relying primarily on military tactics (terror attacks, gaining control of territory, and attempting to hold it), AIAI began to focus on providing social services and building a constituency through philanthropy (Phillips, 2002; Dagne, 2010; Menkhaus, 2005).

Meanwhile, further efforts at national peace and reconciliation were also made. Between November 1996 and January 1997, a conference in Sodere, Ethiopia established a 41-member National Salvation Council (NSC) which was assigned the task of creating a transitional government. Hussein Farrah Aideed — son of the late General Aideed — and the government of Somaliland both refused to attend the conference, however.

A similar conference was convened later that year in Sana'a, Yemen, but this one was also boycotted and rejected by parties to the conflict. It was not until December 1997 that another attempt, this time in Cairo, concluded with an agreement signed by 28 parties (including both Ali Mahdi and Hussein Farrah Aidid). The Cairo Declaration established a Council of Presidents, a prime minister, and a national assembly. But the attendees could not agree on a leader for the new government (AMISOM, 2016).

Meanwhile, back in Somalia, sub-national governance began to emerge. Local Islamic courts sprung up in place of the collapsed Somali government. They maintained a rule of law, collected taxes, and offered basic services such as running water. Local courts were just that, however, local. The courts exercised jurisdiction only within specific sub-clans with no authority outside that sub-clan's town or neighborhood. So while the local courts did much to improve law and order within sub-clans, they did little to establish law and order between them. In fact, they often competed with one another for control of strategic resources (Ibrahim, 2010).

Even within the more stable autonomous region of Somaliland, fragmentation continued to be a major challenge to maintaining law and order. The local courts also proved initially powerless to confront the warlords, who were a major threat to peace and security following the collapse of the Barre government. But the local authorities did at least enjoy some level of legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents which is more than can be said of the warlords (Le Sage, 2005; Marchal, 2007).

The fact that the local tribal leaders and the local courts enjoyed legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents went a long way in preserving order at the local level. A correlation can be drawn between the local peace achieved in Somalia and the perception of the local courts as legitimate in the eyes of the people.

Despite claims that AIAI posed a serious international threat, many experts remain unconvinced concerning its strength and alleged links with international terrorist organizations — claiming that there's no reliable information or pattern of behavior to indicate that the group had an international agenda (Dagne, 2002).

Still, U.S. intelligence reported that AIAI cooperated with al-Qaeda in the 1998 United States embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that claimed the lives of 224 people. After 9/11 and the subsequent defeat of the Taliban, AIAI was labeled a terrorist organization by the United States. Washington feared that the collapse of the Taliban would drive al-Qaeda operatives to Somalia to seek safe haven with AIAI.

Under Executive Order 13224, the organization's finances were frozen and its leaders were sanctioned. The U.S. also put pressure on Saudi Arabia to close down al-Haramain, an Islamic charity that funded AIAI. The Bush administration also froze the assets of al-Barakat — a wire service in

Somalia — claiming that it transferred funds for al-Qaeda (Kelley, 2001; ICG, 2005; Shinn 2007).

In 1998, Aweys started an Islamic court in Merka — a port city in southern Somalia. Aweys, who hails from a sub-clan of the Hawiye/Habr Gedir clan, rose to prominence as the spiritual leader of the Consultative Council of Islamic Courts — a loose network of Islamic courts that controlled Northern Mogadishu. The more moderate members of the group disagreed with Aweys's strict *Wahhabist* views, but they were unable to prevent the hard-liners from taking control. Aweys's court soon became a foundation of the future Islamic Courts Union (ICU) (ICG, 2005; Barnes, 2007; Holzer, 2008).

A major political divide emerged in Somalia. On the one side, the Mogadishu Group was dominated by the Hawiye/Habr Gedir clan and favored a strong central government. This group included *Islamists* such as Aweys, received support from the Arab world, and was staunchly anti-Ethiopian. On the other side, the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC), led by Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmad (a former warlord turned president of Puntland), favored a decentralized state. The SRRC was anti-*Islamist*, pro-Ethiopian, and dominated by the Darood-clan family. These two camps were so bitterly opposed to one another that more than a dozen efforts at reconciliation failed to bring unity to Somalia (Menkhaus, 2007).

One such effort — the 2000 peace talks in Arta, Djibouti — culminated in the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG). The TNG was dominated by the Mogadishu Group and therefore opposed by the SRRC. It faced substantial political opposition by various other clan factions as well. The TNG was also seriously weakened by financial problems and internal conflicts. Three years and four prime ministers later, the TNG admitted defeat and declared bankruptcy (ICG, 2002).

In October 2004 — after 2 years of negotiations — the delegates to the Nairobi peace accords agreed that a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) would replace the defunct TNG. The negotiations were anything but neutral, however, and heavy outside pressure influenced the outcome. The TFG was clearly allied with Ethiopia, and it therefore alienated many Somali sub-clans — especially in and around Mogadishu (Koko, 2007).

Not surprisingly, on 10 October 2004, the TFG elected Abdullahi Yusuf as its president. Yusuf, as the leader of the SRRC and with the support of Ethiopia, had heavily influenced the Intergovernmental Authority on

Development (IGAD) for the past 2 years concerning the formation of a new government.[4] Ethiopia had an interest in replacing the TNG because it had been strongly influenced by *Islamist* groups, and so Addis Ababa supported the SRRC toward that end. Even though IGAD attempted to reconcile the SRRC with the TNG, Ethiopia was able to influence the final outcome and thousands of Ethiopian troops would later support the TFG from late 2006 until the beginning of 2009 (Shinn, 2011).

The resulting TFG, though supposedly based upon the principle of proportional clan representation, was not a unity government at all. Instead, it was a narrow, pro-Ethiopian coalition which excluded *Islamist* groups and TNG supporters alike. Among those which were marginalized by the new government was the Habar Gedir Ayr sub-clan — one of the most influential sub-clans in southern Somalia. The previous TNG president, Abdiqasim Salad Hassan — as well as several prominent *Islamist* figures — descended from this sub-clan (Menkhaus, 2004c).

Both the TNG and the TFG employed the 4.5 formula — an electoral policy that allocates equal seats in parliament to the four largest clan families. Half that number of seats were allocated to the remaining minority groups. However, because Somali-clan families are further divided into sub-clans, the TFG was able to abide by the 4.5 formula in principle while effectively excluding sub-clans that were politically opposed to it (Bryden and Brickhill, 2010).

The TFG was largely viewed as a puppet regime by many ordinary Somalis. A Somali blog representative of this perspective refers to the "U.S. inspired brutal occupation of Somalia by Ethiopian troops" as just another sign of U.S. imperialism and hegemony (Lalkar, 2009). The blog states that the TFG was created by Ethiopia and was controlled by the U.S. It further states that the ICU, which the U.S. overthrew, exercised considerably more authority and created more stability than the TFG could have ever hoped to.

From the Union of Islamic Courts to al-Shabaab

By 2005, eleven clan-based courts merged to form the ICU. Some, like the court in Merka, were radical, and some were more moderate. At the top of the ICU organizational structure, the Supreme Islamic Court was chaired by Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. Some would argue that the real power, however, was

in the hands of Aweys who headed the Shura Council which could approve or veto all decisions made by the Supreme Islamic Court. Still, most districts were ruled according to the individual court that held jurisdiction over it. Therefore, the application of *sharia* and secular law was patchwork depending upon the local judge (Menkhaus, 2005).[5]

Not long after the ICU established itself, hundreds of foreign fighters from Chechnya, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Arabian Peninsula began pouring into Somalia's military training camps. Eventually the ICU became the central judicial body in Somalia and also took on the role of the *de facto* police as local businesses hired its services for protection against gangs and organized crime (Prendergast and Thomas-Fensen, 2007; Bakier, 2008). The ICU also supported two armed insurgencies against Ethiopia: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the ONLF (Connell, 2009).

The leadership of the ICU was comprised of mostly moderate Islamic scholars. As before, however, Aweys's influence was strong, and the hard-liners dominated the courts (Ibrahim, 2010). The ICU won the support of the people as it waged war on crime, drugs, and pornography. Most ordinary Somalis, while not necessarily favoring the imposition of strict *sharia*, preferred the ICU over the corruption and chaos that ensued under the TFG and the warlords (Terdman, 2008; Bruton, 2010; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010).

The rise and success of the ICU in 2006 triggered alarm among Somalia's neighbors and also raised considerable concern within the international community. Ethiopia feared a continuation of AIAI-style attacks while the U.S. suspected that the ICU continued to maintain AIAI's alleged connection with al-Qaeda. Many moderate Somalis worried that, given Eritrea's support for the ICU, Somalia would be used as a battlefield in the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The greater concern within the international community was that Somalia might turn into another Afghanistan (Bruton, 2009).

As the ICU gained influence, the warlords and other clan-based organizations began to challenge its authority and demand that ICU militias withdraw from their districts. However, the ICU claimed a mandate based on the support of the people and the fact that many local businesses had hired its militias to protect them from the warlords. In February 2006, the warlords formed the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-

Terrorism (ARPCT) and were backed by TFG forces and funded by the U.S (Bruton, 2010; Shay, 2010; Stevenson, 2007).

After the failure of UNITAF in 1992–1993, one would think that the United States had learned a lesson or two about dealing with Somali warlords. Nevertheless, the Bush administration decided that the way to fight the *Islamists* was to deputize the warlords and arm them to the teeth. Soon afterward, American CIA agents — laden with briefcases full of cash — arrived in Mogadishu. The fact that the warlords had been exploiting and abusing the Somali people for decades was bad enough. Now they were supported by the United States. The Bush administration's move backfired badly and the ICU grew more popular than ever (Gettleman, 2009).

Fighting between the ICU and ARPCT escalated into open street battles in the capital and continued for 4 months. In April 2006, a UN monitoring group referred to the ICU as a "third force" in Somalia and reported a dramatic increase in its military capability. On 5 June, the ICU took control of Mogadishu, and it soon controlled most of Southern and central Somalia (Kagwanja, 2006; Schiemsky *et al*., 2006).

The ICU victory over the ARPCT and TFG forces marked the first unified rule in Mogadishu in 15 years (Stevenson, 2007; Abbink, 2009; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009). Other groups subsequently joined the ICU (which renamed itself the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts), and its model of governance quickly spread throughout southern Somalia as a result (Menkhaus, 2008; Bruton, 2010).

Puntland and Somaliland still remained outside of the ICU's control, and Baidoa served as the TFG stronghold, but the ICU controlled large portions of Somalia, and its authority was increasing. By October 2006, the ICU had claimed nearly all of the country's key strategic points and was able to transport supplies without hindrance.

Somali businessmen greatly benefitted from the removal of the many roadblocks and checkpoints previously used to tax the movement of goods under the warlords. Furthermore, Baidoa was more or less surrounded and many TFG forces defected to the ICU. If it were not for the Ethiopian military surrounding the city, Baidoa would have likely fallen to the *Islamists* (Roggio, 2006).

For the first time in years, civil society began to return to ICU-controlled areas. Children played outside, trash was collected, and Islam truly equated to a measure of peace. Still, the price was high. Thousands of

Somali civilians had been displaced in the conflict. Unfortunately, the worst was still to come (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2007; Bradbury and Kleinman, 2010).

Many credit the ICU's victory to outside assistance from Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and members of the Somali Diaspora. However, others attribute the ICU's success to the strong nationalist sentiment that developed among the Somali people. This nationalism was fueled by the fact that both the ARPCT and the TFG were backed by the hated Ethiopians, and worse yet, the Americans. The people's perception of the ICU as legitimate and the ARPCT and TFG as illegitimate proved to be a decisive factor (Terdman, 2008; Bruton, 2010).

This perception was echoed by a leading member of the ARPCT as his reason for defecting to the ICU. "I have left the alliance because of requests from elders and other civil society members from my Sa'ad sub-clan" (Aljazeera, 2006).

Had the ICU not been so internally fragmented itself, it might have been more successful in using this spirit of nationalism to unite the Somali people. But two opposing ideologies within the ICU itself prevented this. The first was the division between the moderates who wanted to gain concessions from the TFG and the hard-liners who wanted to overthrow it. Within this division, we can see the basic difference between terrorism and insurgency. Even moderates will sometimes engage in acts of terrorism when it serves their strategic objective.

The second division concerned the issues of morality and foreign influences. The hard-liners wanted to effectively ban any and all foreign media — particularly movies and music. They also wanted to rid Somalia of all social influences (foreign or domestic) that tainted the purity of Islam. The hard-liners imposed a strict interpretation of *sharia* upon Somali society which made them less popular than the moderates. However, the hard-liners controlled the ICU's armed militias (Le Sage, 2009).

While al-Qaeda had little or no skin in the game, it was certainly an enthusiastic spectator. A message, presumably from Osama bin Laden, was posted on the Internet in July 2006 encouraging Somalis to establish an Islamic state in Somalia and promising to join the fight against the TFG and its external supporters (Hansen, 2013). In September 2006, Ayman al-Zawahiri further urged all Somalis to oppose the TFG and its allies.

Soon after, on 18 September, a Somali man named Abdisalan Hirsi Mahmud Lugey became the first known Somali to carry out a suicide attack by detonating his vehicle outside parliament in the provincial capital of Baidoa. The attack, which targeted former president, Abdullahi Yusuf, killed five people and injured several others. Yusuf was not harmed (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

Meanwhile, the ICU made several efforts to convince the international community that it was a moderate force intent on returning peace and order to Somalia. These efforts included (1) improving traveler safety, (2) reopening both the Mogadishu airport and seaport, and (3) fighting pirates (Terdman, 2008).

The ICU's efforts to combat piracy were largely underappreciated. Roughly 90% of global trade passes through the Gulf of Aden and the Suez Canal. Approximately 20,000 ships sail Somali territorial waters every year. Nearly one third of the world's oil is shipped through the Gulf of Aden. Given Somalia's 3,025 km of coastline, protecting coastal waters is no small feat (Menkhaus, 2009a).

Piracy increased dramatically after the ICU disintegrated. The International Maritime Bureau lists 111 recorded attacks off the Horn of Africa in 2008 alone — more than double the number of reported attacks in 2007. Estimates vary, however, depending on how one defines a pirate attack. Also, ships rarely report minor incidents or attempted attacks (to keep insurance premiums as low as possible), so the actual number of attempted attacks and thefts may be considerably higher. It's difficult to be certain.

What is known is that by the end of the year, at least 815 crewmembers had been taken hostage and 23 countries had sent a total of 30 warships to patrol the Gulf of Aden. Estimates of total ransoms collected in 2008 range from $50 million to $130 million — with a record $3.2 million paid for the release of the MV Faina alone (Frump, 2009; Gettleman, 2009; Rothwell, 2009).

By April 2009, Somali pirates were operating within an area extending over 1 million square miles from the Gulf of Aden to the Indian Ocean. Between January and September 2009, an estimated 306 attacks took place. Pirates boarded approximately 114 ships, took 661 crew members hostage, and murdered six others (Ploch *et al*., 2011).

This enormous increase in reported attacks generated renewed interest in piracy. In addition to questions regarding the sovereignty of Somalia and whether it's legal for foreign states to conduct counterpiracy measures in Somali coastal waters, there has also been speculation in the popular media that the recent increase in piracy is somehow linked to terrorism (Burgess, 2008).

But this concern is largely unfounded. While there have been allegaions that al-Shabaab taxes the profits gained from piracy, it's well known that the ICU took a very strong stand against piracy — making it a capital offense and beheading convicted pirates (ICG, 2014; Panjabi, 2009). Unfortunately, the ongoing struggle for power between the TFG and al-Shabaab provided a vacuum within which lawlessness and chaos thrived. Piracy and other forms of violent crime grew rampant as desperate Somali youths were lured into illicit activities by the promise of easy money and a way out of their dismal and hopeless existence (Hanson, 2013).

Despite efforts to demonstrate its intention to restore law and order, the ICU was unable to win the favor of the international community (Wise, 2011). Any further effort became futile once the idea spread that the ICU was controlled by al-Qaeda. As a classic example of the politicization of terrorism, this misinformation was first advanced by Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, in November 2006 and then echoed a month later by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer. As a result, international favor rested largely with the TFG — which was receiving military support from Ethiopia, the African Union (AU), and the United States (Shinn, 2007).

Addis Ababa, of course, benefited substantially from the rumor. With a population that is nearly 50% Muslim, and the ethnically Somali ONLF active within its borders, the last thing Ethiopia wanted to see was an *Islamist* awakening gain ground next store. Selling itself as an agent of light against the forces of evil, it didn't take much for the Zenawi administration to convince the U.S. to back the Ethiopian invasion (Gettleman, 2006).

On 6 December, the UN passed Resolution 1725 (in 15 minutes!). The resolution authorized IGAD and the surrounding AU Member States to train and protect TFG forces. The resolution further stipulated that according to the arms embargo originally imposed in 1992 (under UN Resolution 733) and readdressed in 2002 (under UN Resolution 1425), the surrounding AU Member States would not deploy troops to Somalia. However, the

resolution did allow weapons to be introduced for the sake of training and protection (United Nations, 2006).

On 20 December 2006, the ICU attacked TFG forces in Baidoa which were heavily backed by Ethiopian troops. The attack failed miserably. Many of the ICU's fighters fell in the offensive, and many more were driven back by the superior Ethiopian military (Hackett, 2006; McGregor, 2008).

On 25 December, Ethiopian forces "officially" crossed into Somalia with 14,000 troops where they were accused of indiscriminately shelling civilian areas — including entire neighborhoods — with white phosphorous, prompting the EU to open a war crimes investigation (Harper, 2012).

White phosphorous burns human flesh to the bone, and it keeps burning until it is deprived of oxygen. Victims who survive the burns often die of vital organ failure as the phosphorous is absorbed into the body. The UN presented photographs and soil samples demonstrating that affected areas had 117 times as much phosphorus as normal. These and other atrocities forced hundreds of thousands of Somalis out of Mogadishu (Smith, 2007).

By 29 December, a combination of TFG forces, Ethiopian troops, and AU peacekeepers backed by U.S. air power reclaimed Mogadishu — and the TFG moved its headquarters to Mogadishu. In the face of utter defeat, Aweys resigned as the leader of the ICU (Stevenson, 2007; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009; Harper, 2012).

By 12 January 2007, the combined forces took Ros Kamboni — the ICU's only remaining stronghold. On 13 January, the TFG declared a state of martial law throughout Somalia in an effort to consolidate its authority. The ICU disintegrated with the moderate members fleeing to Eritrea and the hard-liners reconstituting into al-Shabaab and later Hizbul Islam. Many of the group's fighters simply went back to their clans and took their weapons with them (McGregor, 2008; Menkhaus, 2008). For the first time since 1991, the federal government controlled most of Somalia (Browne and Fisher, 2013).

From al-Shabaab to the Present Day

The group that would officially become known as al-Shabaab began as the Youth Movement wing of the ICU. The official name of the group is

Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin or Movement of the Striving Youth.[6] It's not entirely certain when the group began, and reports of its origin vary.

One version suggests that al-Shabaab emerged in 2005. After a string of ICU members were assassinated in Mogadishu, the group retaliated with a number of reprisal killings (Barnes and Hassan, 2007). Another version suggests that Aweys created the group in 1998 as the military arm of the ICU (ICG, 2008). A variation of this report claims that Aweys created the group in 2006 to fight against the Ethiopians (Ibid.). A third version claims that the group formed in 1996 in a training camp in South Central Somalia (Bakier, 2008). A fourth version suggests that al-Shabaab emerged in 2003 after a group of radicals stormed out of an AIAI meeting in Laascanood and later formed the group (Dagne, 2010; Shinn, 2011). In an interview in 2011, Ahmed Madobe (who later became president of Jubaland State) claimed, "I wasn't just in the Shabaab; I helped found it" (Gettleman, 2011).

Accounts of al-Shabaab's early leadership also vary. By one account, Aden Ayro was appointed as leader by Hassan Aweys — his long-time mentor — who was then the leader of the Shura Council of the ICU (Dempsey, 2006).

According to this account, the CIA attempted to assassinate an al-Qaeda operative, Abu Taha al-Sudani, believed to have been sheltered by Aweys and Ayro in a compound in Mogadishu. The CIA authorized a raid in July 2004 which resulted in the death of Ayros's brother-in-law (neither Ayro, Aweys, nor al-Sudani were present). Ayro allegedly spent the next 18 months recruiting and training poor and marginalized young Somali men. These young fighters were not religious radicals by any means. Unemployed and desperate, their loyalty lay first with their clans and second to the ICU due to the wealth of social services it offered (Vidino *et al.*, 2010).

Despite differing accounts of the group's early leadership, it's generally agreed that the original members included Ayro, Godane, Mukhtar Robow, Faud Mohamed Khalaf Shangole, and Ibrahim Haji Jama al-Afghani.[7] It's also believed that all five of these men trained in Afghanistan.

The Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006 played an important role in both the rise and operational strategy of al-Shabaab. First, al-Shabaab owes much of its original success to the intense anti-Ethiopian sentiment felt by many Somalis. While the ICU gained legitimacy for its ability to offer stable governance amid the chaos in the wake of the Barre

regime, al-Shabaab's legitimacy derived from the fact that it was fighting a foreign invasion. This perception of the group among average Somalis boosted its recruitment efforts substantially and largely allowed it to transcend clan identification (Solomon, 2014). As a result, al-Shabaab's membership increased dramatically from about 400 to several thousand.

Second, the invasion pitted the young and tiny "David" against the much larger and seasoned "Goliath." Thus, al-Shabaab learned to employed guerrilla tactics early on in order to survive. Finally, the presence of a foreign army encouraged radicalism.

While the Ethiopian incursion had been successful in wiping out the ICU, it was not successful in eradicating the threat of Islamic radicalism. In fact, the opposite was true. By December 2006, when the ICU was driven out, more than 5,000 al-Shabaab fighters remained behind in Mogadishu alone (Wise, 2011; Bruton and Williams, 2014).

Al-Shabaab had been the military arm of the ICU. With its more moderate master driven out, the group had to rely on its own political leadership as well as advice from outsiders. Much as was the case with the ICU, the more radical elements in the organization quickly floated to the top. Al-Shabaab soon presented a much greater threat to Ethiopia than the ICU ever did (Menkhaus, 2013).

Al-Shabaab was able to capitalize on the chaos that ensued in the South Central regions of Somalia in 2007, and the group earned tremendous popularity for its efforts to expel the Ethiopians. This popularity afforded al-Shabaab financial support and plenty of new recruits. While AIAI was not able to control territory outside the town of Luuq, both the ICU and al-Shabaab gained control of large portions of Somalia — although neither group was able to maintain control for very long (Shinn, 2009; Curran, 2011).

A commercial property-owner in Mogadishu (that has requested to remain anonymous for reasons of personal safety) revealed that the group is highly organized and very strict with its members. The source also disclosed that most al-Shabaab fighters are poor, illiterate young men who are fiercely loyal to the organization (although the group has also been able to attract increasing numbers of young women as well — mostly through family connections with existing members). Since the majority of the rank and file cannot read, it's much easier for the group to radicalize them (Anonymous, 2016).

The group established training camps and, in the absence of any real government opposition in the South, was able to arm and train its recruits quickly and effectively without hindrance. Thus, the Ethiopian invasion was largely responsible for both radicalizing al-Shabaab and transforming it into the most lethal militia in Somalia (Menkhaus and Boucek, 2010; Wise, 2011).

As al-Shabaab increased in power, it began to expand the area under its control. Whenever the group took control of a new region, it would use a combination of charity, public rallies, and propaganda to win over the majority — often coopting local clan elders for support. Where public relations failed, intimidation and sheer terror succeeded (Bruton, 2009; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Curran, 2011).

The group operated much as the ICU did before it, as a network of more or less independent administrations accountable to a central Shura Council consisting of 85 members and led by the group's *emir*. Each administration was responsible for implementing al-Shabaab's radical interpretation of *sharia.* However, as with the ICU, the actual implementation varied from one administration to the next (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009; Shinn, 2011).

The Shura Council possessed the authority to overrule decisions made by individual administrations, such as when the Office for Supervising Foreign Agencies reversed the decision by some administrations to increase the number of aid agencies permitted to operate due to the drought in 2011 (Chothia, 2011).

In most cases, al-Shabaab enforced a strict *Salafist* interpretation of *sharia* in an effort to radically reform all aspects of Somali life and society. The group also used *Salafi-Wahhabism* as a way to transcend clan loyalties and forge alliances between clans (Roque, 2009).

The group's religious police, the Army of Hisbul, carried out *hudud* (harsh punishment for crimes against *sharia*) — including public whippings and amputations for crimes such as stealing, drug use, or improper dress. Public executions were reserved for more serious crimes such as murder and adultery. All forms of entertainment — movies, music, sports, and dancing — as well as any public coed activity were prohibited. Women were required to completely cover their body and were denied participation in most aspects of public life. Indeed, women were forbidden to go out in public unless accompanied by a male relative. Single women were often compelled to get married — sometimes on penalty of death if they refused

(Albin-Lackey *et al*., 2010; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Macleod and Flamand, 2010).

While the emphasis was clearly placed upon policing the population, these administrations also collected taxes, built and repaired infrastructure, and provided other public goods. However, these services also varied by administration (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

Al-Shabaab forced two major transitions on Somali society where the group was active. The first involved the imposition of strict *sharia* as discussed above. This observance of *Salafist* doctrine as law was alien to the vast majority of Somalis whose clan-based approach to conflict typically depended upon customary law and, in the case of an interclan dispute, negotiation between clan elders. However, the imposition of *sharia* bypassed both customary law and, in large part, the elders as well. Since most Somalis refused to accept this new order willingly, al-Shabaab often forced it upon them (Menkhaus, 2007; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

In early 2007, Ayman al-Zawahiri released a statement encouraging al-Shabaab and other *Islamists* in Somalia to employ suicide attacks to drive out the invading forces. Capitalizing on a power struggle between TFG president, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, and prime minister, Ali Mohamed Gedi, al-Shabaab established itself as a formidable opposition force and began to recapture territory lost to the TFG.

Fighting in the capital grew fierce as al-Shabaab and various other warlords and factions continued to oppose the TFG. By the end of 2007, the group would gain control of most of the capital — all but a tiny federal holdout protected by AU peacekeepers — but the civilian toll was alarming. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that over 600,000 civilians fled Mogadishu in 2007 and over a million were left homeless (UNHCR, 2007).

While al-Shabaab primarily targeted TFG, Ethiopian and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces, it was not yet strong enough to confront them in conventional battles. Rather, the group employed a variety of suicide blasts, car bombs, and sniper attacks.

In April 2007, for example, the group exploded a car bomb outside the Ambassador Hotel in Mogadishu where TFG officials were known to stay. The blast killed mostly civilians, however. In June 2007, al-Shabaab launched a suicide attack against the home of Prime Minister Gedi.

Although Gedi himself wasn't injured, seven guards and the attacker were killed.

The TFG, itself largely considered a faction rather than a unity government, used the threat of terrorism as an excuse to request foreign assistance to defeat its political adversaries. However, internal division was also a problem. The president and prime minister were from different clans. Ahmed was from the Majeerteen Harti Darood clan, and Ghedi was from the Abgaal sub-clan of Mogadishu's Hawiye clan. The two were bitter rivals and fought over clan politics. The dispute further dashed any hope of stabilizing the regime.

International support for the TFG also split. With only a fraction of the projected AU peacekeeping forces mobilized, Ethiopia began to complain that it bore the brunt of the support. Meanwhile, the UN accused Ethiopian forces of human rights abuses (Weinstein, 2008).

In September 2007, the more moderate members of the former ICU met with former TNG deputy prime minister, Hussein Mohamed Farrah, and the former TNG Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden.[8] The meeting resulted in the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). The group approved a constitution, created a central committee, and vowed to oppose the TFG and its allies (Menkhaus, 2009b; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010).

By the beginning of 2008, al-Shabaab had begun to engage Ethiopian troops in more conventional battles and actually win. Having largely shifted away from its early guerrilla tactics, the group launched an offensive against Ethiopian and TFG forces and gained control over territory throughout southern Somalia (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Curran, 2011).

Already in January 2008, AU Commission Chairman, Alpha Konare, issued a warning that al-Shabaab had captured areas outside of Mogadishu. Konare also expressed concern that al-Shabaab was enlisting additional fighters and planning to increase its territory.

The AU was also alarmed at the group's success, and in February 2008, the U.S. State Department designated al-Shabaab a terrorist organization (IRIN, 2008; Shinn, 2011). On 5 April, al-Shabaab released a statement declaring that the designation was an honor (NEFA, 2008). Al-Qaeda also responded by issuing its first public recognition of the group and encouraging Somalis to fight for an independent Islamic state (Shinn, 2011).

The second transition that al-Shabaab forced upon the Somali public began in May 2008 after Ayro, the group's *emir*, was killed in his own home by an American missile strike. Ayro was succeeded by Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed Godane, also known as Mukhtar Abu Zubair. Godane had trained with al-Qaeda and fought in Afghanistan until 2001. He'd also been an integral member of AIAI (Shinn, 2009, 2010).

Born in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, Godane was in many respects an outsider from the beginning. Although he was no stranger to the cause, he hailed from the Isaaq tribe in the North and therefore did not have the support of his clan to count on in the Deep South where al-Shabaab mainly operated (Le Sage, 2010; Abukar 2013).

After becoming *emir* of the group in 2008, he began to refute clan loyalty and impose the *takfiri* doctrine upon Somalis and fellow al-Shabaab members alike. This latter development took place as the Ethiopian occupation was beginning to wind down, making al-Shabaab's brutality that much more intolerable. Once Ethiopian troops completely withdrew in January 2009, the group enjoyed minimal support from the *Sufi* majority who clung to clan loyalty and resented the imposition of *Salafi* doctrine on their daily lives (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010).

Dwindling local support and strong clan loyalty among the group's rank and file increased the need for foreign fighters. Therefore, al-Shabaab also began to develop its online media program through which it warned against the evils of democracy and denounced Western influences.

Godane was shrewd enough to realize that in order to increase foreign recruits, he needed to elevate the conflict in Somalia beyond the local level. The group was particularly successful in attracting young Somalis from the diaspora, but it was also able to recruit a fair amount of non-Somalis as well (Thomas, 2013; Bryden, 2014).

Suicide is taboo in Somali culture and brings shame and disgrace upon the family. The inclusion of a foreign contingent allowed al-Shabaab to introduce unconventional tactics into its repertoire such as the use of suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Al-Shabaab first employed martyrdom operations in 2006 against a government convoy, and it has depended upon the tactic more and more as the number of foreign recruits supplied willing operatives (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).[9] Arabic and English are spoken in the group's martyrdom

videos, demonstrating both their intended audience as well as the continued stigma of suicide in Somali culture (Vidino *et al*., 2010).

Likewise, al-Shabaab also increased its use of IEDs dramatically. Often referred to as roadside bombs, IEDs were fairly uncommon in Somalia prior to 2006. The group largely depended upon drive-by assassinations using technicals — machine guns mounted on the back of a pick-up truck (McGregor, 2008).

However, by 2011, IEDs had become the weapons of choice as unexploded artillery shells became more available. While the IEDs al-Shabaab used were initially very crude, extracting the explosive material from the shells, packing the IEDs with shrapnel, and successfully activating the devices with a mobile phone required much greater sophistication and technical expertise than is commonly available among the average Somali population. Therefore, the group's increasing reliance upon explosives for IEDs and suicide vests is often attributed to foreign expertise and training (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Shinn, 2011).

In June 2008, the ARS and the TFG concluded a peace agreement — calling for a 90-day ceasefire and the eventual withdrawal of Ethiopian troops. However, Aweys rejected the agreement. A split emerged between the moderate members of the ARS and the hard-liners who, led by Aweys, formed the Asmara wing of the Alliance (ARS-A). Al-Shabaab also sharply criticized the ARS for cooperating with the TFG (Kasaija, 2010; Menkhaus, 2008; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

In September 2008, al-Shabaab announced that it had established a government administration in Kismayo and that it was planning to declare the Islamic Emirate of Somalia. The group stated that administrative posts would be allocated between al-Shabaab, surviving ICU members, and clan elders. However, various clan elders and ICU commanders that were left out of the negotiations criticized the arrangement (Grace 2008a).

In January 2009, three important factors would unfold. First, the ARS joined the TFG — resulting in Sheik Sharif Ahmed, the former Commander in Chief of the ICU, emerging as the new president of the TFG (Le Sage, 2010). Senior leaders within al-Shabaab refused to acknowledge the agreement, however, and the group launched attacks on the ARS — calling it a puppet of the TFG (Menkhaus, 2009; Dagne, 2010; Shinn, 2011).

Within a few months, the new coalition government had lost control of nearly all the territory the TFG recovered in 2007. By July 2010, the

government only controlled a small portion of Mogadishu and even that was only possible because of the assistance of 4,000 Ugandan and Burundian peacekeepers (Samatar, 2010; Shinn, 2010).

Second, Ethiopia withdrew its forces. Al-Shabaab lost much of its popular support once Ethiopia pulled out. Somalis were willing to put up with the imposition of strict religious mandates in exchange for liberation from Ethiopian occupation. However once the Ethiopians left, support for the group decreased significantly as people grew tired of its adherence to strict *sharia* and harsh punishments.

Popular resistance against al-Shabaab continued to escalate throughout 2009. Mass protests throughout Mogadishu culminated in December after al-Shabaab launched a suicide attack against a large graduation ceremony for medical doctors — killing 19 (Bruton, 2010; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Lister, 2012). The group was forced to rely more and more on foreigners and forced conscripts (Bruton, 2009; Menkhaus, 2009; Le Sage, 2010).

Somali moderate groups that opposed al-Shabaab took advantage of the group's declining popularity. One such group is *Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a* (ASWJ). Also known as "the Majority," ASWJ was formed in 1991 and is comprised of Somali *Sufi* moderates. The group, which allied itself with the TFG, clashed with al-Shabaab after it began destroying the tombs of *Sufi* saints.

While ASWJ receives support from Ethiopia and can muster larger numbers than al-Shabaab, its forces are not as well trained, leaving ASWJ at a distinct disadvantage. Also, the group's reliance on Ethiopia has led many Somalis to view it as a proxy of Addis Ababa. Still, ASWJ continues to fight against al-Shabaab with support from federal forces (Bruton, 2009; Gettleman, 2009; Hassan, 2009).

Third, under the leadership of Aweys, the ARS-A merged with three other *Islamist* militias to form Hizbul Islam: Mu'askar Ras Kamboni (Ras Kamboni Brigade), Jabhatul Islamiya (Islamic Front), and Mu'askar Anole (Anole Brigade).

ARS-A was led by Aweys and dominated by the Ayr clan. The Ras Kamboni Brigade was founded by former commander of both AIAI and the ICU, Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki, and dominated by the Ogaden clan. The Anole Brigade was dominated by the Marehan clan but also had some fighters from the Harti clan, and the Somali Islamic Front was led by

Mohamed Ibrahim Hayle and dominated by Hawiye sub-clans. Seeing itself as now the largest and strongest militia in Somalia, al-Shabaab refused to join (Lossi, 2009; Dagne, 2010; Le Sage, 2010; Wise, 2011).

The merger was doomed to fail from the beginning, and there was contention as clan rivals competed for control. For instance in April 2009, the Anole Brigade clashed with the Ras Kamboni Brigade in a territorial dispute near the port city of Kismayo in the southern Lower Juba province of Somalia (Roque, 2009).

At times, Hizbul Islam cooperated with al-Shabaab, but there were also times when the two groups battled over territory (Le Sage, 2010; Roggio, 2010). For example in October 2009, a dispute erupted over control of Kismayo. This time the Ras Kamboni Brigade contended with al-Shabaab. Kismayo had traditionally been an Ogaden city, and the contention created a rift in the Ras Kamboni Brigade itself. One group led by former AIAI commander, Hassan al-Turki, sided with al-Shabaab against the other group, led by al-Turki's son-in-law, Ahmed Madobe. Al-Turki had more fully embraced al-Shabaab's *Salafist* ideology and was, therefore, more willing to rise above clan politics and accept outside leadership in Kismayo. Madobe, on the other hand, was much more clannish and attempted to defend Ogaden clan interests in the port city (Hansen, 2013).

The conflict also caused further division in Hizbul Islam with ARS-A and the Islamic Front aligning with al-Shabaab and the Anole Brigade remaining neutral. Al-Shabaab claimed a clear victory and took control of the city. Over the next 3 months, al-Shabaab successfully drove the Madobe faction out of southern Somalia. Meanwhile, in February 2010, al-Turki's faction merged with al-Shabaab (Dagne, 2010; Hesse, 2010; Höhne, 2010).
Hizbul Islam had been negotiating a merger with al-Shabaab since 2009 when it became clear to Aweys that his group could not emerge as the dominant force. However, local disputes prevented any successful agreement for over a year (Roggio, 2010).

At the same time, disagreements among senior members of al-Shabaab were brewing, primarily over Godane's authoritarian style of leadership. Al-Shabaab had previously been ruled collectively by the senior leadership rather than according to the dictatorial approach assumed by Godane (Abukar, 2013).

A division eventually erupted between Godane (whose group consisted of a large number of foreign fighters) and Robow and Afghani (who formed

a coalition of nationalists).[10] The nationalist group increasingly refused to take orders from Godane, and the two factions began to oppose one another (Bryden, 2014).

In return, Godane made several public statements signaling that al-Shabaab shared al-Qaeda's vision of global *jihad* (a fight for global *jihad* has more appeal to foreign fighters than a local power struggle ever could). He made several attempts to alter the group's international image such as (1) adopting the use of suicide bombers, which were previously unheard of in Somalia, (2) changing the group's name to *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin* (Mujahidin Youth Movement) in an effort to stress its global agenda, (3) stopping the use of the Somali flag and nationalist slogans, and (4) forcing Somali women to marry foreign fighters (Bruton and Williams, 2014).

Despite Godane's efforts to change the face of the group, both factions continued to be predominantly concerned with the local power struggle rather than global *jihad*, suggesting that Godane's sworn allegiance to al-Qaeda and other cosmetic changes were simply attempts to gain outside support, convince foreign fighters to stay, and regain control over a quickly disintegrating group (Ploch, 2010; Omar, 2012). While al-Shabaab's senior leaders were believed to have trained with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, most foot soldiers knew very little about al-Qaeda (Lister, 2012).

Despite the local flavor of both groups, there were key differences in ideology between them. The nationalist faction rejected an alliance with al-Qaeda, the involvement of foreign fighters, and especially the practice of purging Islam by killing apostate Muslims. As a result of these differences, intense fighting broke out between the two al-Shabaab factions (Bryden, 2014).

In July 2010, IGAD approved an additional 2,000 AMISOM troops to fight al-Shabaab. Particularly interesting is the fact that IGAD did not preclude bordering states — including Ethiopia — from contributing troops. This increase in troops (particularly Ethiopian troops) offered the two opposing al-Shabaab factions a common enemy to converge around.

A week later, the group launched the retaliatory twin suicide attacks in Kampala. These attacks can be viewed as an effort to coerce Uganda to withdraw its troops from Somalia and as a warning to other countries as well. However, the attacks can also be seen as an effort to instigate a harsh reaction from the international community and provoke a surge of foreign

troops (particularly Ethiopian troops), which had previously been their greatest source of legitimacy and support.

To some extent, the provocation was fruitful. Literally within hours of the attacks, Ugandan forces retaliated by bombing a residential area of Mogadishu, generating support for al-Shabaab and hatred for the TFG. Ethiopia's official reaction was more tempered, however. In accordance with U.S. policy, Addis Ababa ruled out sending more troops to Somalia at that time (Bryden, 2014).

Disagreements between the two factions continued over a variety of divisive issues such as whether to merge with Hizbul Islam (Godane was against the merger) and the Shura Council's decision to ban aid agencies from assisting during the famine (Bruton, 2010).

In September 2010, Robow (a deputy leader of the group) moved his militia out of Mogadishu and went back to the Bay region in protest of Godane's leadership. The ongoing contention eventually led to al-Afghani's elevation to the position of *emir* of the nationalist faction in December 2010. Al-Afghani allowed the merger with Hizbul Islam to go through, and it officially joined ranks with al-Shabaab on 24 December 2010 (Dagne, 2010; Roggio, 2010; Shinn, 2011; Abukar, 2013).

To absolutely no one's surprise, fighting between al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam quickly emerged. Infighting within al-Shabaab itself also began to take its toll, and by August 2011, al-Shabaab once again lost control of Mogadishu to federal forces with the help of AMISOM troops (Shinn, 2011; Omar, 2012; Hansen, 2013).

Uganda was the first African country to contribute troops to AMISOM in March 2007. Kenyan forces joined the struggle against al-Shabaab in October 2011 and were officially integrated into AMISOM in June 2012.

On 16 October 2011, Operation Linda Nchi was launched as Kenyan forces crossed over into southern Somalia with a two-fold mission: capture Kismayo and wipe out al-Shabaab. Kenya's decision to invade Somalia came after 2 years of planning and preparation. Al-Shabaab had long created both regional security concerns and posed a direct threat to the Kenyan economy (Anderson and McKnight, 2015).

A number of factors came to a head in 2011 that prompted Kenya to act when it did. First, the ongoing refugee crisis along the Kenya–Somalia border was exacerbated by the drought that devastated East Africa in mid-2011. Kenya accused al-Shabaab of attacking aid workers on the Kenyan

side of the border (Chothia, 2011; Gettleman, 2011; Hirsch, 2015). Second, the recent success of AMISOM forces in Mogadishu, no doubt, encouraged Kenya to kick al-Shabaab while it was down. And third, Kenya has a vested interest in stabilizing southern Somalia as it is actively developing its own northern regions (Williams, 2016).

The same day that a Kenyan battalion crossed into Somalia to create a 100 km buffer zone, air support targeted al-Shabaab positions near Qoqani in Lower Juba. Kenya's hopes of wiping out al-Shabaab were premature, however. The next day, al-Shabaab hit a Kenyan patrol boat with a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) off the coast of Lamu, injuring three.

On 18 October, the group dispatched a suicide operative who exploded a car bomb near the Foreign Ministry in Mogadishu. The attack occurred while Kenyan defense minister, Mohammed Yusuf Haji, and foreign minister, Moses Wetangula, were visiting. No one was injured, however, as the planned route to the airport had been changed last minute.

The next day, al-Shabaab exploded a remote-control bomb near the seaport in Mogadishu. The group attacked Kenyan soldiers on 21 October and again on 27 October. The same day, al-Shabaab militants killed two Ministry of Education officials. On 28 October, a paramilitary vehicle from the Kenyan General Services Unit (GSU) hit a roadside bomb planted 7 km from Garissa, Kenya.

The attacks continued through November and December with al-Shabaab militants ambushing Kenyan convoys with RPGs, killing international tourists in Kenya, throwing hand grenades into a church, and assaulting Kenyan police officers and government officials (Zimmermann and Khatib, 2012).

Pushback from AMISOM forces was fierce. While al-Shabaab didn't break, it did retreat. And in its absence, clans began to clash as they competed for local power and control over resources. Similar to the period following the fall of the Barre regime, chaos ensued. The TFG was too divided and corrupt to maintain control in the capital much less over the rest of the country. Nearly two dozen ministates were established — many with well-armed militias that not only fought al-Shabaab but also battled each other (Gettleman, 2011).

In December 2011, senior al-Shabaab members met and agreed to change the name of the group to *Imaarah Islamiyah* (Islamic Authority) — stating that they were no longer young. The senior members also agreed to

alter the tactics of the organization and to establish a Shura Council for the Islamic Emirate of Somalia. Godane, who did not attend the meeting, posted a message on the group's twitter page denying any such name change (Odowa, 2011).

For 2 years, internal struggles over practical matters such as the value of allying with al-Qaeda, the *takfiri* doctrine, and the inclusion of foreign fighters prevented al-Shabaab from making any real headway toward its strategic goals. However, in June 2013, the group's infighting came to a head. The two contingents clashed in Barawe. Afghani was killed by Godane's men while Aweys and Robow fled. Aweys cut a deal with the TFG, and there have been unsubstantiated rumors that Robow — who escaped to his Rahanweyn clan in the Bay and Bakol region — also defected to the Somali government (Lister, 2012; Bryden, 2014).

Godane launched an attack against any remaining supporters of Aweys and Robow within the ranks of the group, including foreign fighters such as al-Amriki (Harper, 2012; Abukar, 2013). Godane's purge of the nationalist faction had a three-fold effect.

First, it consolidated Godane's power and allowed him to more convincingly promote the image of a group committed to international *jihad*. Second, it greatly reduced al-Shabaab's military capacity as the majority of the group's foot soldiers came from Robow's Rahanweyn clan (Abbink, 2009). Third, Godane's purge of foreigners loyal to Robow and Aweys greatly jeopardized the group's appeal for foreign fighters and revealed that the *jihad* in Somalia was first and foremost a local struggle for power (Abukar, 2013). Yet the group remained a force to be reckoned with.

On 12 November 2013, the United Nations Security Council authorized an additional 4,000 peacekeepers in Somalia to battle al-Shabaab militants. By July 2014, Kenya alone had 4,400 soldiers fighting in southern Somalia, and the Kenyan navy patrolled Somali waters. A "temporary" increase in troop strength brought the total number to 22,126 AMISOM forces in Somalia although many of these were simply a real-location of Ethiopian forces that were already deployed to Somalia (Reuters, 2013; Anderson, 2014).

Still, simply sending more troops is not the answer. The main problem is that the federal government has little (if any) legitimacy in the eyes of the people. More troops can never solve that problem. The UN has effectively chosen sides in a long and bloody civil war, further delegitimizing the

federal government in the eyes of many Somalis and actually exacerbating the violence (Lynch, 2013).

AMISOM initially attempted to defeat the group by liberating al-Shabaab controlled territories and then holding them. This approach was effective to a degree as it cost the group in two ways. First, a few senior leaders were killed in the process. Second, the loss of towns often meant the loss of profits from taxing local businesses and from operating illicit smuggling operations. It's estimated that al-Shabaab raised approximately $70–$100 million annually from taxing local businesses. The group also earned an estimated $15 million by illegally exporting charcoal (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Chothia, 2011).

However, this approach also cost AMISOM as well. First of all, al-Shabaab would often retreat at the sight of AMISOM forces and surrender towns without a fight — destroying wells, clinics, and most other vital infrastructure as they left. Then, the group would set up camp a few kilometers away. As AMISOM forces gained control of more and more towns, its critical supply lines grew longer and more vulnerable and its troop strength began to grow thin. Al-Shabaab would then attack AMISOM forces where they were most vulnerable with sporadic hit-and-run tactics and by planting IEDs along major supply routes (Williams, 2016). However, al-Shabaab was not AMISOM's greatest problem.

Not only did AMISOM troops lack properly trained personnel to govern in these newly acquired areas, but the presence of foreign troops (and especially Ethiopian troops) also caused resentment among the residents. AMISOM forces have been implicated in sexually abusing and exploiting Somali women and young girls. At the other extreme, AMISOM national contingents often engaged in illicit side deals with the locals. For example, Kenyan troops allowed charcoal and sugar to be smuggled through Kismayo, indirectly aiding al-Shabaab and costing AMISOM considerable legitimacy (Anderson and McKnight, 2015; Ahmed *et al*., 2015).

Al-Shabaab, the Ras Kamboni Brigade, and local merchants all benefit from the export of charcoal and sugar. al-Shabaab was believed to be earning approximately one million per month by taxing imports and exports transported through the port of Kismayo. However, it's estimated that al-Shabaab is actually drawing more revenue now from taxing trucking routes than it did when it controlled the port of Kismayo (Roble, 2010; Anderson and McKnight, 2015).

Furthermore, the presence of Somali National Army (SNA) troops was an affront to local leaders and powerbrokers. This was especially true since many SNA recruits come from the Hawiye clan. Given the nature of clan politics in Somalia, the high representation of Hawiye in the SNA created suspicion that its interests in southern Somalia were not neutral. In other words, it was obvious to everyone involved that capturing state resources was the name of the game, not rebuilding the Somali state. Therefore, the SNA was perceived as an agent of the Hawiye clan rather than an agent of the federal government (McConnell, 2014).

As the localized struggle for resources raged on, al-Shabaab was largely adapting to the situation. The joint military effort to defeat al-Shabaab largely only served to disperse it, effectively exporting terrorism across Somalia's borders (such as that which occurred with Russian military intervention in the second Chechen War).

Rather than attempting to create a state within a state and govern such as IS has done, al-Shabaab has instead taken a more transnational course of action by adopting a guerrilla-style hit-and-run approach aimed at destabilizing the entire region. This new approach is facilitated by Somalia's long and poorly protected border with Kenya. While the Shura Council dictates strategic goals, individual al-Shabaab militias continue to be commanded locally. AMISOM needs to change its approach as well if it ever hopes to be effective in ridding Somalia of al-Shabaab.

Al-Shabaab retaliated against AMISOM involvement with twin suicide attacks in Uganda, the much-publicized Westgate Shopping Mall attack in Nairobi and again when the group attacked a university in Garissa. The group has also continued to orchestrate attacks against Ugandan, Kenyan, and Burundian AMISOM bases. These operations have evolved into complex hybrid attacks, utilizing both suicide bombers and suicide infantry. After armed operatives launch an assault and secure access for the suicide bombers, they detonate themselves as well to maximize casualties (Bryden, 2014).

Godane continued to lead al-Shabaab until he was killed in a U.S. drone strike in southern Somalia on 1 September 2014. Eight days later, Ahmad Umar (aka Abu Ubaidah), one of Godane's generals, succeeded him as the group's *emir* (Chothia, 2014).

Umar was a member of AIAI since 1996 and later became an officer in the ICU. He was educated and headed a *Quranic* school in Kismayo. Umar

became a member of al-Shabaab in 2007 and worked as Ayro's assistant. In 2008, he became Godane's assistant after Ayro was assassinated. Umar was promoted to deputy governor for the group over the Lower Juba region in late 2008, and on 29 June 2009, Umar was again promoted to governor of Bay and Bakool regions.[11] As al-Shabaab's governor, he imposed a *Salafist* interpretation of *sharia*, enforced a strict code of conduct on humanitarian workers operating in the regions, and absolutely forbade any and all aspects of Western culture.

In January 2012, Godane appointed Umar as transitional military commander of Bay, Bakool, and Gedo regions. Godane promoted Umar again in November 2013. This time the appointment was to the position of advisor. It's been speculated that Umar influenced Godane's decision to purge the group's foreign fighters in 2012–2013. He's also credited with leading the contingent that murdered al-Amriki. From Godane's advisor, Umar moved up to oversee al-Shabaab's Office of the Interior where he largely dictated the group's domestic policy. From that position, Umar became *emir* (Cleaves, 2015).

On 5 October 2014, Somali and AU troops forced al-Shabaab out of the coastal city of Barawe — the group's only remaining stronghold and the location of its headquarters for the previous 6 years. Control of Barawe afforded al-Shabaab strategic access to a major route for importing weapons, fighters, and finances (AMISOM, 2014).

Umar firmly adheres to the *takfiri* doctrine and is infamous for his brutality. He's reported to be equally ruthless in his leadership. When the news broke that the group's spiritual leader, Abdul Qadir Mumin, pledged *bay'ah* to IS in October 2015 with roughly 100 (mostly younger) followers, Umar responded by directing the Amniyat, al-Shabaab's secret police, to start sniffing out and arresting other members who might also pledge their allegiance to IS. Hussein Hassan, a popular preacher based in Kenya who once supported al-Shabaab, has also been influencing members to pledge allegiance to Baghdadi (IISS, 2015; Kriel and Duggan, 2015).

The faction of fighters drawn to IS represents just one of Umar's problems. There are also an unknown number of members that oppose the *takfiri* doctrine. Representative of this group is former intelligence chief, Zakariya Ismail Ahmed Hersi, who surrendered to authorities in December 2014. "There were a number of us who opposed the leadership's approach and its flawed doctrine," Hersi revealed to journalists in January 2015.

Hersi referred to the *takfiri* doctrine as a "distorted form of the holy *jihad*, which has resulted in countless innocent Somali citizens being killed" (AFP, 2015).

Even though most people in the West have become aware of al-Shabaab only since the attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in September 2013, the group is fighting a battle that has raged on for decades. At the heart of the matter are clan politics, border conflicts, and the age-old issue of who possesses the legal and legitimate right to rule Somalia (Bruton and Williams, 2014).

In February 2015, an al-Shabaab operative carried out a suicide attack at the Central Hotel in Mogadishu, killing the deputy mayor, two legislators, and 23 others. Nearly 50 more were seriously injured. The following month, 24 people were killed when the group laid siege to the Maka al-Mukarramah Hotel in Mogadishu. The group continues to launch increasingly deadly guerrilla attacks such as the assault on a Kenyan army camp in El-Adde in January 2016. Al-Shabaab posted a video of the assault, claiming to have killed over 100 Kenyan soldiers.[12] Although the Kenyan government denies the death toll, al-Shabaab's tactics are successfully hindering AMISOM forces.

In February 2016, Ambassador Maman Sidikou claimed that AMISOM forces had liberated 80% of Somali territory. Despite the fact that there are still more than 22,000 AMISOM forces in southern Somalia today, poor coordination and a lack of cooperation prevents them from being effective. Al-Shabaab continues to enjoy freedom of movement and maintains a troop strength of approximately 7,000 fighters (ISS, 2015; Williams, 2016).

In March 2016, a U.S. airstrike hit the group's Raso training camp in the central Hiran region, killing almost 70 militants and wounding dozens more. Among the victims were several al-Shabaab commanders who were there for the graduation ceremony of hundreds of recent recruits.

Although al-Shabaab initially focused on nationalism and controlling Somali territory, the group has since altered its operational tactics and increasingly attacks foreign targets. Whether this change is out of necessity — due to military defeats and the loss of Mogadishu, Kismayo, and Barawe — or whether al-Shabaab has legitimately changed its ideological focus from national interests to global *jihad* remains a matter of speculation. The conflict remains largely unresolved to this day.

[1]It is for this reason that I felt it necessary to add considerable historical and contextual information relating to these two groups.

[2]See, for example, Besteman (1996), Menkhaus (2000b), Coyne (2006), and Hagmann (2007).

[3]United Somali Front (USF), Somali Party (USP), United Somali Congress (USC), Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA), Somali National Movement (SNM), United Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Front (SNF), Somali National Alliance (SNA), Somali Africans Muke Organization (SAMO), Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), and Somali National Union (SNU).

[4]The Intergovernmental Authority on Development is a trade bloc consisting of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.

[5]Please see Stevenson (2007), Harnisch and Zimmerman (2010), and Mwangi (2010).

[6]In local parlance where I live in the Middle East, shabaab simply translates as "guys."

[7]See, for example, Dagne (2010), Harnisch and Zimmerman (2010a), and Woodward (2012).

[8]President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed nominated Nur Hassan Hussein as Prime Minister after Ghedi resigned in October 2007. Yusuf himself was forced to resign at the end of 2008 (Lister, 2012).

[9]Please see Harnisch and Zimmerman (2010), Shinn (2011), and Byman (2012).

[10]The majority of the group's non-Somali foreign fighters come from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Sudan and are believed to have been recruited by third party organizations such as Kenya's Muslim Youth Center (MYC).

[11]During this period, Umar was known as Mahad Omar Abdikarim.

[12]Al-Shabaab posted a video of the assault, claiming to have killed over 100 Kenyan soldiers (News Desk, 2016).

Chapter 5

The Strategic Terrorism of al-Shabaab

The locust flew away but it left hardship.

— Somali Proverb

In this chapter, we consider how al-Shabaab devised its strategic objectives as well as the extent that ideological, tribal, and religious factors helped to shape, advance, or hinder those goals. In what ways are the group's strategic objectives different from its immediate predecessors and why? Have these goals been consistent? If not, how have they changed and evolved since the group's inception?

We begin by identifying al-Shabaab's theoretical underpinnings, tracing any influences the group may have adopted from its predecessors and exploring the practical implications of these influences on the group's strategic goals and tactical use of violence. Next, we detail the various stages that al-Shabaab has moved through and identify which stage the group is in now. Finally, we apply the framework of strategic terrorism to al-Shabaab.

Militant Groups in Somalia

As mentioned in the previous chapter, disunity is endemic in Somalia. The ongoing conflict in the country is much more complex than any one cleavage (i.e., religious vs. secular or Islam vs. Christianity) can explain. Ambitious warlords, corrupt politicians, greedy businessmen, and

constantly shifting alliances prevail in the place of stable political institutions. Even in the relatively stable autonomous region of Somaliland, governance stems from the political will to cooperate and not from official political institutions (ICG, 2006). This absence of effective top-down governance in the face of strong clan-based loyalties is a reality that deserves recognition (Menkhaus, 2007).

Gaining the trust of the people is critical to uniting them behind any single cause. Organizations in Somalia might gain the local support of the people in any number of ways. First, they must be careful not to abuse the people as the TFG forces, warlords, and gangster politicians have typically done. Second, insurgent groups in Somalia might earn a measure of respect in the eyes of the local population by fighting foreign forces such as Ethiopian, American, and AU peacekeeping troops — all largely considered invaders by ordinary Somalis. Armed groups in Somalia may also gain the public trust by offering protection, enforcing laws, and punishing infractions as the ICU militias did. In return — once an organization has earned the trust of the people — they often enjoy support from religious leaders, local mosques, Somali businesses, and individuals in the form of food, water, shelter, and clothing. Most importantly, such groups gain legitimacy in the perception of the people (Seery, 2009).

Militants in Somalia also frequently receive arms and munitions through soldiers who defect from the TFG. These soldiers are equipped with weapons and supplies provided mainly by Ethiopia and also by the United States and other foreign governments. Thus, Somali armed factions tend to be well-armed.

Finances are obtained by Somalis living abroad who send remittances. Financing also flows directly from Saudi Arabia and through Muslim charities such as the World Assembly for Muslim Youth (WAMY) and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) (Grootaert *et al*., 1999; Saggiomo, 2011).

The main point to be made is that al-Shabaab did not emerge in a vacuum. Both its ideological underpinnings and its strategic objectives are in many ways connected to the broader context and adopted from groups that came before it. The following is a summary of the major arteries of militancy in Somalia prior to the emergence of al-Shabaab.

In this section, we'll examine AIAI, the ICU, and the limited role of al-Qaeda in Somalia. We'll compare and contrast these group's ideological

underpinnings and strategic objectives, and we'll consider any continuity between them. We'll also demonstrate that, for the most part, the main division within these groups has been between the moderate and radical elements. As these elements battled each other, factions within have formed, splintered, disintegrated, and then re-emerged again under the same leadership with different names. The same would later be true of al-Shabaab.

Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya (*AIAI*)

AIAI was a *Salafist* group that drew its influences from the *Wahhabi* tradition in Saudi Arabia. While there is some speculation regarding the level of involvement AIAI may have had with al-Qaeda, it's doubtful that the group adopted its *Wahhabism* from al-Qaeda as Somalia has enjoyed a direct link with the Arabian Peninsula for centuries.[1] Not to mention, when al-Qaeda did attempt to establish itself in Somalia, its operatives were attacked by bandits and extorted by the various clans. In the end, these obstacles and the overall lack of appeal of *Salafi* Islam among the *Sufi* majority precluded al-Qaeda from establishing a franchise in Somalia. However, al-Qaeda was able to recruit a few young men such as Ayro and Godane to train in Afghanistan (Stevenson, 2007; Shinn 2011). Given all the facts, it's unlikely that AIAI maintained any lasting operational relationship with al-Qaeda.

Neither did AIAI employ strategic terrorism. While the group technically falls within the *jihadist* camp given its emphasis on violence, AIAI was largely attempting to replace some semblance of law and order in the chaos that followed the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991. As such, it acted more like a pseudogovernment than a terrorist organization. By providing public services and collecting taxes, it attempted to win broad popular support and gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In fact, it's not entirely unlikely that AIAI might have taken a more peaceful route through mainstream politics had the opportunity been available. However, given the structure of society in Somalia, clan politics, and the sheer power of the warlords at the time, such an option simply wasn't viable (Menkhaus, 2013).

AIAI's ideology was a combination of *Salafism* and nationalism, and its primary goals were to oust the corrupt Barre regime, establish an Islamic government in Somalia, and free the Ogaden region (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009; Stevenson 2007). While Aideed's United Somali Congress deserves most of the credit for defeating Barre, it was a collaborative effort.

Although the precise extent of AIAI's actual involvement in overthrowing Siad Barre in 1991 is largely unknown, we do know that the group never rose to the level of prominence in Somalia as the ICU briefly did. Rather, AIAI's heyday came after the state collapsed when the group governed the town of Luuq for 5 years from 1991 to 1996 and launched a string of terrorist attacks in Ethiopia in the 1990s. With the successful overthrow of the Barre regime, AIAI focused on its remaining two goals of establishing an Islamic government and freeing the Ogaden region from Ethiopian control (Menkhaus, 2005; Shinn, 2011).

Regarding AIAI's second goal of establishing an Islamic government in Somalia (which it failed to achieve), the absence of a central government obviously created a vacuum in which various groups competed for power. However, the specific absence of the secular/socialist Barre regime — which had ruthlessly stifled any expression of religious or tribal identification — meant that competition could now be framed in both tribal and religious contexts.

AIAI also failed to achieve its third strategic objective, freeing the Ogaden region from Ethiopian control. Its tactics were initially limited to terrorist attacks against Ethiopian forces. In 1996, AIAI attempted to assassinate the Ethiopian minister of transportation in Addis Ababa. Although the attempt failed, the minister of transportation was seriously injured. The group is also suspected of perpetrating a string of explosions in Addis Ababa in 1996 and 1997 and kidnapping a number of relief workers in 1998 (Menkhaus, 2013).

AIAI's terrorist activity elicited harsh responses from Ethiopian security forces. On 18 September 1996, the Ethiopian army attacked AIAI forces in the district of Luuq. Over the next 2 years, AIAI fought both Ethiopian forces and later mainly Somali National Front (SNF) militias receiving substantial support from Ethiopia. The fighting ended when a truce was negotiated at a peace conference held in December 1998. Many of AIAI's members fled to Yemen, and Aweys later became a prominent member of the ICU (Bryden, 2006; Omar, 2012).

Islamic Courts Union

The ICU can largely be seen as an extension of AIAI. After AIAI was defeated in 1998, Aweys and other key players in AIAI simply laid low and regrouped to continue the fight another day. When they re-emerged as the ICU, no one had any illusions as to where this "new" group had come from. Ethiopia feared a continuation of AIAI-style attacks while the U.S. suspected that the ICU continued to maintain AIAI's alleged connection with al-Qaeda (Bruton, 2009; Shay, 2010).

Despite bin Laden's vow to fight foreign troops on Somali soil, the ICU's practical relationship with al-Qaeda is also highly questionable. In fact, the ICU even went so far as to publicly denounce al-Qaeda (Dagne, 2010).

In this respect, we can draw very similar conclusions regarding the ideological makeup of the ICU as we did with AIAI. Neither group employed strategic terrorism. And while the ICU is technically a *jihadist* organization, like AIAI it was also so heavily involved in governance that we have to wonder whether, given different circumstances, the group might not have opted for a more peaceful alternative.

The answer to this question is definitely maybe. The ICU was internally divided between the moderates — who wanted to compromise with the TFG, and consequently with Ethiopia — and the hard-liners that wanted to overthrow the TFG, impose *sharia,* and reclaim the contested lands in Ethiopia and Kenya that constituted Greater Somalia (Terdman, 2008). Whether the ICU might have taken a more peaceful path and renounced its *jihadist* ways depends on which element might have ultimately dominated the group.

Even though the application of *sharia* and secular law was patchwork in the lower-level courts, the *Salafi* faction clearly dominated the ICU in 2006. Aweys headed the Shura Council, and the hard-liners controlled the ICU's armed militias (Le Sage, 2009). As long as Aweys and the hard-liner faction maintained the upper hand, it's safe to assume that the ICU would have remained a *jihadist* organization.

However, the *Salafi* hard-liners were not at all popular with the *Sufi* majority in Somalia. Therefore, had the moderates been able to influence the future course of the group, given their level of popular support and their

willingness to work with the TFG, the ICU would most likely have made the transition to an *Islamist* group and possibly even denounced violence.

Another question is the issue of the Ogaden. The hard-liners within the ICU shared AIAI's vision of freeing the Ogaden region from Ethiopian control. However, the moderate members were willing to compromise. Just how much they were willing to compromise is uncertain. Given that the ICU was defeated and dissolved in 2007, we can never know the answer to these questions with total certainty.

The ICU was clearly successful in achieving it first goal of defeating the ARPCT. As for its second strategic objective, the ICU was never able to establish an Islamic government over the whole of Somalia. However, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (leader of the moderate faction) did serve as president of Somalia under the TFG from 2009 to 2012. Regarding its third goal, the ICU engaged Ethiopian troops directly and supported two armed insurgencies against Ethiopia: the OLF and the ONLF (Connell, 2009). Despite these efforts, the ICU failed to free the Ogaden region from Ethiopian control.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda has been more successful in East Africa and the Horn than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa. Osama bin Laden operated out of Sudan between 1991 and 1996, and al-Qaeda later claimed credit for the 1998 attacks on the two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2002 hotel bombing in Kenya. The 9/11 attacks, combined with a number of other factors, culminated in the change of U.S. foreign policy toward Somalia from mostly humanitarian and reconstruction efforts to focusing primarily on counterterrorism. While 9/11 served as the main impetus for this switch, other reasons included the 1998 attacks on the two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Somalia's proximity to the Middle East, and the suspicion that al-Qaeda may try to relocate its base of operation to Somalia (Riedel, 2007).

Declassified al-Qaeda documents reveal that Osama bin Laden considered Somalia to be a potential safe haven and possibly even the next Afghanistan. Abu Hafs al-Masri, a top al-Qaeda lieutenant, travelled to

Somalia frequently to determine the potential ability of Somali *Islamists* and to equip and train *jihadists* (Watts *et al*., 2007).

In December 1992, UNITAF began to arrive in Mogadishu to deliver food to starving Somalis. On 29 December, al-Qaeda exploded a bomb at the Gold Mohur Hotel in Aden, Yemen where U.S. troops lodged on their way to Somalia. The attack failed, however, as the troops were already en route to Somalia (Shinn, 2007).

Later in February 1993, an elite group of seasoned al-Qaeda operatives arrived in Somalia. They set up three training camps and solicited the aid of AIAI fighters to target U.S. operations in the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Qaeda also assisted Mohamed Farah Aideed, a prominent Mogadishu warlord who fought in the resistance against UNITAF forces. The U.S. pulled out of the operation in October 1993 after Aideed's militia shot down a special forces Black Hawk helicopter (Kohlmann, 2009; Shinn, 2009).

Short-lived victories aside, bin Laden believed that conditions in Somalia would create a steady supply of willing recruits — eager to fight against the foreign invaders. However, Somalia turned out to be far different than anticipated. Al-Qaeda operatives met with massive corruption in bordering states only to be extorted by rival Somali clans and attacked by Somali gangs once they entered Somalia (Riedel, 2007).

Somali clan leaders were largely in agreement concerning their desire to expel U.S. forces from Somalia. However, they were even more concerned with defending their own clan's interests against the claims of other clans. Abu Hafs attempted to create a sense of unity among the various leaders but to no avail. The cost of operating in Somalia proved too high for al-Qaeda (Watts *et al*., 2007).

Al-Qaeda continued to hold an interest in Somalia, and it encouraged Somalis to wage *jihad* against foreign forces. U.S. intelligence, however, was not aware of the threat that al-Qaeda posed in the region until 1996 (Kean, 2011). Following the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7 August 1998, the U.S. actively pursued three al-Qaeda operatives linked to the attacks (Fazul Abdullah Muhammad, Abu Taha al-Sudani and Salah Ali Salah Nabhan). Intelligence reports suggested that AIAI had provided safe haven for the three operatives in Somalia (Marquardt and Shinn, 2009; Vidino, 2010).

In 2007, al-Sudani was killed in an Ethiopian airstrike near the Kenya–Somalia border (Grace, 2008b; Shinn, 2009). Nabhan appeared in an al-

Shabaab promotional video in 2008. He was allegedly involved in training for the organization in southern Somalia. Nabhan died on 14 September 2009 near Barawe — along with three Somali al-Shabaab members — when four American military helicopters fired upon their trucks (Gettleman, 2009; Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010). Lastly, Muhammad was killed at a military checkpoint outside Mogadishu on 7 June 2011 (Omar, 2011).

While al-Qaeda was clearly involved in Somalia during the early 1990s, the extent of its involvement is still undetermined — as is the nature of its relationship with the groups under examination. What is clear is that the presence of al-Qaeda in Somalia has failed to materialize into the threat originally predicted by Washington. In addition to the difficulty of operating in a failed state, Somalia's *Sufi* majority and clan-based system make it an unfavorable location for al-Qaeda to thrive in (Dagne, 2002; Watts *et al*., 2007).

Even though al-Shabaab officially joined al-Qaeda in 2012, scholars have pointed to earlier evidence of the group's ties to al-Qaeda such as Godane's press releases proclaiming global *jihad* and the various messages released by American member, Abu Mansoor al-Amriki, as proof of the group's ideological alignment with al-Qaeda (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

In one message released in January 2008, Amriki quoted Qutb and Sayyid Abu al-A'la Mawdudi and insisted that al-Shabaab would never accept anything short of *sharia* in Somalia. Amriki insisted that this refusal to compromise with the *kaafir* (infidel) governments distinguished al-Shabaab from the ARS who had sold out and left the path of *jihad*. Amriki also criticized the ICU for their willingness to cooperate with clan politics and for abiding by the borders limited by the *taghoot* (a ruler that does not follow *sharia*).[2] Finally, Amriki claimed that al-Shabaab's methodology is the same as bin Laden's, Zawahiri's, and Zarqawi's.

Scholars also point to the fact that Godane increased the number of foreign fighters, adopted the tactic of suicide attacks (which were previously unacceptable in Somalia), and upgraded the quality and sheer quantity of the group's media releases as indications of al-Shabaab's ideological connection to al-Qaeda.

Still, there are reasons to doubt the practicality of the relationship between al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. It's true that Godane increased the number of foreign recruits and adopted the tactic of suicide attacks. By 2009, more than 20 young men had joined al-Shabaab from America alone.

One American recruit, Shirwa Ahmed, was among the group's first suicide bombers in October 2008 (Ephron, 2009). Al-Shabaab successfully recruited young men from Canada as well (CBC, 2011). So how do we explain Godane's reliance on foreign recruits if it's not due to a strong working relationship with al-Qaeda?

First of all, we have to consider Godane's situation at the time that he assumed leadership of al-Shabaab. From a strategic standpoint, it made perfect sense for Godane to at least pretend to shift from a predominantly nationalist position to an international focus as his organization was facing increasing opposition from the clans over the imposition of *Salafist* doctrine. This became particularly relevant as the Ethiopian invasion drew to a close and the group lost its main rallying cause. Godane needed to justify the harsh interpretation of *sharia* as Somalis were no longer willing to accept it as the lesser evil. The increasing quality and quantity of al-Shabaab's media releases served this purpose.

The shift to a primarily international appeal, in turn, created a rift between the nationalist faction led by Aweys and Robow and those that were loyal to Godane. At the heart of this rift is the same issue that rose up again and again: whether to topple the corrupt apostate regime and establish a state based on *sharia* first or whether to attack the far enemy first.[3]

The ensuing power struggle created the need for Godane to recruit outsiders. While agreeing that Somalia belonged to Allah and therefore should be ruled according to *sharia*, the earlier leadership (2006–2008) played the patronage game and were careful to work within clan politics as much as possible.

Godane declared war on the old leadership and eventually purged the nationalist faction from the group. Foreigners were useful to Godane as they were willing to do things that most Somalis would not (suicide missions, defying clan politics, murdering clan elders, etc.). Godane needed them to effectively counter the growing resistance from the Somali public as well as to consolidate his power in relation to the nationalist opposition within the organization itself. Once Godane achieved the upper hand, he still needed foreign fighters to insulate and protect him from his enemies among the more clan-minded members of the group (Gartenstein-Ross, 2009). Therefore, foreign fighters were strategically valuable to Godane.

Furthermore, the group largely attracted foreign recruits through *jihadist* propaganda. In this respect, any alleged ties to al-Qaeda were very valuable.

In light of these facts, it is not entirely surprising that Godane released a video in 2009 offering his services to al-Qaeda. But this still does not automatically suggest that there was a viable working relationship between the two groups.

By far, the most compelling reason to question the true nature of the relationship between the two groups is that al-Shabaab transformed from a *jihadist* group under Ayro to a *takfiri* group under Godane. In this respect, al-Shabaab was ideologically closer to al-Qaeda under Ayro than it was under Godane — even though the earlier al-Shabaab leadership was openly opposed to a relationship with al-Qaeda (Harper, 2008).

If the relationship between the two groups was legitimately an operational one, why did al-Qaeda largely ignore al-Shabaab's pleas for help from the international community? For example, in August 2008 (after Godane took over leadership of the group), al-Shabaab released a video practically begging for reinforcements. In the video, Commander Abu Yusuf Saalih Anabhaani pleads, "Oh muhajirins, oh muhajirins, will anyone respond? Will you not rush to the help of your brothers in the army of difficulty?" (Grace, 2008b). Assuming the relationship between the two groups was as strong as some suggest, why did al-Qaeda not respond to al-Shabaab's cry for help by sending operatives?

Even more puzzling, why did al-Qaeda remain silent during Godane's reign of *takfiri* terror when bin Laden and Zawahiri were so outspoken against Zarqawi? Al-Qaeda didn't attempt to exercise control over al-Shabaab at all (Harnisch 2010a, p. 28). In fact, we have little evidence of any direct correspondence between the two groups (as occurred between al-Qaeda and AQI). Contact between al-Shabaab and the al-Qaeda leadership generally consisted of unofficial statements made indirectly through media releases or some other intermediary.[4]

In all fairness, there could be legitimate reasons for this lack of direct correspondence. For instance, in 2010, bin Laden (apparently replying to a request from Godane to join al-Qaeda) suggested that correspondence between the two groups remain informal for security reasons (Meleagrou-Hitchens, 2015). Another possibility is that bin Laden had such dire concerns about making another mistake such as the one he'd made with Zarqawi that this is the reason why al-Shabaab's membership into al-Qaeda was delayed until after bin Laden's death — despite Godane's many efforts to court the group (IISS, 2015).

Finally, there's Godane's internal purge of foreign fighters in 2012–2013, among which Amriki's death was the most conspicuous (Pantucci and Sayyid, 2013). Recall that Amriki was under the mistaken impression that al-Shabaab's ideology lined up with al-Qaeda's. This isn't so mysterious if we consider the possibility that Godane used the group's alleged ties to al-Qaeda to attract foreign fighters in the first place and then used the foreign fighters to purge his enemies from the ranks.

In an open letter to Zawahiri released in April 2013, Ibrahim al-Afghani requested that Zawahiri intervene in a controversy between Godane and the international operatives. The conflict seems to center around Godane's dictatorial approach to leadership and the foreign fighter's apparent disillusionment with the overall direction of the group (Ibid.).

Observations such as these should raise serious questions regarding the true nature of the relationship between al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda. Other than simply assume a practical working relationship between the two groups based upon the changes instituted by Godane, we must also consider that, given Godane's need for outside support against the nationalist faction, he likely attempted to maximize the international appeal of the group in any way possible.

As for al-Qaeda, the situation in Somalia made the country an ideal poster child for the global *jihad*. When Christian Ethiopia invaded Muslim Somalia with the backing of the evil United States, it created a propaganda opportunity that was too good for either group to pass up. We have to consider, however, that while Somalia offered an ideal situation for al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab under the leadership of Godane did not.

Given Somalia's religious composition, its strategic location via the Arab Peninsula, and its proximity to key Islamic cities such as Mecca and Medina, one would have expected that the invasion of the country by infidel crusaders would have turned it into a hotbed for international terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. However, this is not the case at all. While the ongoing conflict in Somalia has clearly involved citizens and territory of more than one country, it can hardly be labeled a global *jihad* of the al-Qaeda variety.

Even al-Qaeda's global *jihad* is aimed at driving the far enemy out of the Islamic world so that it can focus on destroying the near enemies: Israel and apostate regimes such as those in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan (Gerges, 2005; Riedel, 2007). Furthermore, several U.S. State

Department officials argue that most terrorist cells in Africa are pursuing local aims not global ones (Whitlock, 2012, p. 2).

Even though al-Qaeda wasn't able to set up permanent operations in Somalia, it has enjoyed some limited access. The perpetrators of the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" incident allegedly received arms and training from al-Qaeda; the operatives involved in the East Africa embassy bombings took refuge in Somalia; and the arms used in the 2002 Mombasa attacks were smuggled through Somalia (ICG, 2005).

In spite of attempts by al-Qaeda to capitalize on Somalia's unique opportunities, terrorism in Somalia has been — and continues to be — primarily a tactic used by local groups in a localized struggle for power. What's more, conflict in Somalia is mainly a secular clan-based/nationalist struggle framed at times as a religious cause and at other times as anti-imperialist, anti-Ethiopian, anti-Kenyan, and anti-American. Framing the conflict in such a multidimensional way has attracted substantial foreign interest. And while a very small number of foreign *jihadists* have entered the fray due to their religious convictions, the vast majority of individual participants see the cause as one of nationalism, clan loyalty, a matter of economic opportunity, or all of the above (Ibid.).

Al-Shabaab

As we examine the ideological underpinnings of AIAI and the ICU, we can trace the line of continuity from one group to the next. The same can be said of al-Shabaab under the original leadership of Ayro. Aweys dominated the ICU via control of its armed militias. When Ethiopian troops forced the ICU out of Somalia, the group split. The moderates fled and later joined the TFG, while the hard-liners stayed behind to fight. In the struggle for dominance among the militias that followed, al-Shabaab emerged victorious. However, the group maintained the *Salafi jihadist* ideology of Aweys and other hard-liners who had also been members of AIAI and the ICU (Wise, 2011).

The group retained most of its predecessor's strategic objectives with a few exceptions. AIAI and the hard-liners within the ICU both wanted to (1) overthrow the existing order, (2) establish an Islamic state, and (3) expand that state to include Greater Somalia.

Al-Shabaab also attempted to overthrow the existing order. The group initially battled Ethiopian troops and TFG forces, and it's now battling AMISOM troops and SNA soldiers. However, it would appear that al-Shabaab's objectives have changed since its inception. Al-Shabaab's primary goal used to be the liberation of Somalia from foreign occupation. Whether or not this is still the group's primary goal is highly debatable.

Second, while al-Shabaab initially wanted to establish an Islamic state, the group's current strategy suggests that statehood may no longer be an immediate objective either (Menkhaus, 2016). Both of al-Shabaab's predecessor groups boasted Islamic scholars, judges, and former government officials as members, whereas al-Shabaab is mainly comprised of militants. The group does have its hierarchy, of course. However, al-Shabaab's leadership continues to be highly decentralized as compared to AIAI or the ICU (Turbiville *et al*., 2014). This decentralization may be a factor.

Third, al-Shabaab shares its predecessors' vision of a Greater Somalia. This goal is evident by the group's support for the ONLF and its own activity in Kenya and Uganda (Opalo, 2010; Hirsch, 2015). It's not clear, however, what role al-Shabaab sees itself playing in the actual governance of such an entity should it succeed in establishing it.

Does al-Shabaab Employ Strategic Terrorism?

As we recall, strategic terrorism involves three stages: (1) disorientation, (2) target response, and (3) gaining legitimacy (Neumann and Smith, 2005). We determined that al-Qaeda meets all three criteria. AQI and IS, on the other hand, only *appeared* to employ strategic terrorism. The purpose of this section is to explore whether al-Shabaab's violence can be labeled as strategic terrorism.

We can argue that, like AQI, al-Shabaab has largely been operating in the favorable circumstances of foreign occupation. Since al-Shabaab's primary goal was to drive out the Ethiopian forces, the group enjoyed a tremendous amount of legitimacy as most ordinary Somalis perceived the group as freedom fighters. This is evident in the fact that al-Shabaab received support from Somalis living abroad.

Despite the fact that Somalia's economy utterly depends upon remittances, the foreign diaspora supported al-Shabaab even though it could very possibly have jeopardized the entire remittance structure and left millions of Somalis without any assistance at all. Why did they take such a huge risk? Because in 2006–2007, most Somalis were furious at Ethiopia and the U.S. The Ethiopian invasion devastated Mogadishu. Of approximately 1.3 million people in the capital, 700,000 were displaced, and the ICU (the only stable governance structure Somalia could claim for the past 16 years of civil war) was shattered (Menkhaus, 2016).

So when al-Shabaab emerged as the defender and liberator of the Somali people — willing and able to stand against the invading forces — it was able to combine national sentiment with anti-Ethiopianism, anti-Americanism, and of course, Islam. Therefore, many Somalis rejected the U.S. designation of al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization in 2008 (Menkhaus, 2013).

Suffice it to say that foreign occupation definitely worked to the group's advantage. Had the organization been militarily and administratively capable, it would likely have replaced the TFG and governed Somalia under *sharia*. However, al-Shabaab was largely comprised of militants not scholars — it therefore lacked the administrative capacity.

The Four Phases of al-Shabaab

The history of al-Shabaab can be divided into four phases: January 2006–December 2007, January 2008–April 2008, May 2008–July 2011, and August 2011 to the present.

Phase One: Prior to 2008, the group was neither militarily strong enough to confront the Ethiopian forces conventionally nor was it administratively capable of governing the country. While it enforced *sharia* and imposed a crude form of taxation during these early years, it operated more like a well-armed gang than a government.

Phase Two: Al-Shabaab did, however, grow in both capacities. By early 2008, the group began to engage its enemies in pitched battles that resembled conventional rather than guerrilla warfare. The group also began to assume control of large swaths of territory, collect taxes, govern, and provide a measure of public goods such as judiciary services, law

enforcement, and welfare (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Wise, 2010; Mwangi, 2012).

Furthermore, al-Shabaab took over the radio and print media outlets in the areas that it controlled (Wise, 2011). The group's 85-member Shura Council boasted a degree of organization that made other militias, and even the TFG, pale in comparison (Bruton, 2009, Shinn, 2011).

Phase Three: In May 2008, the group changed leadership after Ayro was killed in a drone attack. Godane, the new *emir*, faced a number of challenges. First, he was a northerner (from the Isaac clan) leading a primarily southern organization. Because he had no clan base to support him, he needed to somehow transcend clan loyalties if he hoped to negotiate the clannish political terrain of southern Somalia. He did this primarily by emphasizing allegiance to the group rather than to the clan (Bruton, 2010).

However, Godane's attempts to transcend clan loyalty did not sit well with the clan leaders, which meant that foot soldiers were now forced to choose between allegiance to their clan and allegiance to al-Shabaab. Many chose the former as the predominantly *Sufi* Somalis were not easily swayed from allegiance to their clan in order to stay in the good graces of a *Salafis*t militant group. The *takfiri* doctrine became an effective motivator. However, the brutal killing of fellow Muslims did not bode well with most of the other senior leaders of the group who had spent years perfecting the clan politics game and cementing the support of clan elders. A split occurred.

Thinning recruits were made even thinner as Ethiopian forces began pulling out, thus increasing the need for fighters. Conscripts, child soldiers, and foreigners began to fill the ranks (McConnell, 2012). Foreign fighters were particularly useful as they were willing to do things that most Somali fighters would not: defy clan elders and commit martyrdom operations. Godane, therefore, needed to make the *jihad* in Somalia more appealing to international fighters. What better way than to pledge allegiance to al-Qaeda? An alliance with al-Qaeda would allow Godane to frame the conflict in Somalia as part of the global *jihad* rather than what it actually was — a local squabble primarily in the Southern half of a country that nobody cared about.

Phase Four: By August 2011, al-Shabaab had lost control of Mogadishu to federal forces with the help of AMISOM troops. The group began to retreat from the territories it once controlled and revert back to guerrilla-

style tactics. It also began to launch more transnational attacks, increasingly attacking foreign targets.

While the dates attributed to these four phases are by no means exact (rather like attributing the beginning of nation-states to the Treaty of Westphalia), the four phases themselves are accurate enough in that they represent changes in al-Shabaab's tactical operations.

Another way to slice the data would be to argue that there are two distinct ideological phases. The first phase occurring while al-Shabaab was still under the leadership of Ayro and the nationalists. This phase constitutes the *jihadist* phase of al-Shabaab. The second phase is from the death of Ayro in 2008 to the present day. This phase constitutes the *takfiri* phase.

It is certainly true that the transition from a *jihadist* group to a *takfiri* group was not instantaneous. In fact it was not until 2013 that Godane was able to completely purge the nationalist faction from the group. However, Godane's *takfiri* ideology caused a reaction from the nationalists almost immediately, and they increasingly refused to take orders from him. I have chosen to employ the four phase typology as it allows a more precise analysis via the three stages of strategic terrorism.

Stage One — Disorientation

Under the leadership of Ayro, al-Shabaab enjoyed tremendous popularity as the liberators of Somalia. During this early period, the group enjoyed the support of the clans, businessmen, and average Somalis. Since al-Shabaab focused the majority of its attention and resources on fighting the Ethiopian military and TFG forces, one could argue that its tactics more accurately resembled a guerrilla insurgency rather than strategic terrorism because its aim was to topple the corrupt regime rather than to coerce political concessions through violence.

This is where the analysis gets a bit tricky. The primary focus of the first stage of strategic terrorism is disorientation, not winning hearts and minds. Up through January 2008, while al-Shabaab's senior leadership was very careful to work with clan leaders and navigate the troubled waters of clan politics (winning hearts and minds), the group targeted not only its military enemies but also all supporters of the TFG, the warlords, non-cooperative

clan leaders, and anyone else that resisted the group and/or its strict *Salafist* doctrine.

Given the nature of the asymmetric conflict and the group's initial lack of sophistication, al-Shabaab relied primarily upon violent attacks that killed more civilian bystanders than actual targets. Therefore, while it would appear that — prior to January 2008 — al-Shabaab employed strategic terrorism because collateral damage (disorientation) was very high, we have to look at the group's objectives. Unlike AQI under Zarqawi, had al-Shabaab been strong enough during phase one to avoid the extensive collateral damage among civilians, it would have.

We have to question whether the group was primarily trying to erode the security of the people in order to make the government look incapable of maintaining order and stability or whether it was simply trying to win an asymmetric conflict with the resources it had available at the time. In other words, was the group's strategic goal to conquer the enemy or merely manipulate political change through terror?

Clearly, at that time, al-Shabaab sought to overthrow the TFG and establish a new government. Furthermore, we can surmise based on the group's course of action after January 2008 that, had it been previously strong enough to confront its enemies in a more conventional manner, it would have — thus avoiding much of the disorienting effect.

While it may have appeared questionable whether to label al-Shabaab's violence strategic terrorism or guerrilla insurgency prior to January 2008, I argue here that the group's resources were simply poorly equipped to meet its strategic goals without causing a tremendous amount of collateral damage. However as Neumann implies, sound strategy only requires an actor to employ the means at its disposal in such a way as to achieve its policy objectives (Neumann, 2002). Given that al-Shabaab's tactics prior to January 2008 drew it nearer to its objectives (as measured in territory under its control during phase two), we can argue that the group's strategy was sound.

Al-Shabaab' short-lived success in the first half of 2008 reveals its true strategic objectives, at least for that period. The group waged conventional battles, controlled territory, collected taxes, and governed much as the ICU had done before it. Despite any doubt regarding its true nature in phase one (2006–2007), al-Shabaab had clearly moved into the realm of insurgency by

phase two — particularly given the effort of its senior leadership to coopt the clan elders.

During this time, al-Shabaab began to directly administer the populations living in the territories it controlled (Mulaj, 2010). The group, therefore, needed to cooperate with the clan leadership more than ever. It's difficult to speculate what might have happened had the group not suffered the loss of Ayro. Had Ayro survived, he would no doubt have been a more diplomatic administrator and not ostracized the other senior leaders and clan elders who appear to have been Godane's biggest obstacles.

Phase three (May 2008–July 2011) under the leadership of Godane represents a period of division and stalemate. Even though al-Shabaab controlled substantial territory and governed during this phase, it had suffered the loss of its legitimacy and popular support (Le Sage, 2010). The group also split into opposing factions and Godane increasingly relied upon foreign fighters to subdue his enemies — both inside and out of the group. But the use of foreigners also came at a price.

Somalis are well-known for their hatred of foreign intervention in their country (Byman, 2012). Godane's heavy reliance upon foreigners no doubt cost him any local support the group may still have enjoyed (Dagne, 2010; Shinn, 2011). The practice of killing apostate Muslims also exacted its toll, resulting in defections and resistance from opponents within the group and also from other moderate militant groups such as ASWJ. Al-Shabaab factions were now fighting each other, the TFG, Hisbul Islam, moderate militant groups, and AMISOM forces (Mulaj, 2010). The group eventually began to lose all the territory it came to control.

Phase three also represents a transition for al-Shabaab. Whether Godane truly believed in the *takfiri* doctrine or whether he simply utilized it to consolidate his power is anyone's guess. However, the group's strategic objectives were now in flux. Godane was no longer seeking legitimacy from clan elders or anyone else that did not recognize his leadership.

Much like Baghdadi, Godane employed the *takfiri* doctrine against his enemies. This break with clan politics and the sheer magnitude of opposition it created made it impossible for al-Shabaab to continue to govern the territory under its control effectively. Furthermore, the loss of passive support (refusal to cooperate with the group's opponents) combined with the lack of active support (safe haven, recruits, and donations) dictated a change in strategic objectives.

Just as in phase one, it's difficult to discern whether al-Shabaab's violence during phase three constitutes strategic terrorism or insurgency. On the one hand, the group no doubt terrorized much of the population, and its actions were indeed disorienting. On the other hand, without the realization that the group's objectives had likely changed, its harsh punishments could easily be construed as an effort to enforce its strict version of *sharia* over the territory it controlled — and its growing reliance upon suicide attacks and IEDs as reflecting its deteriorating military capacity and growing inability to confront its enemies in a more conventional manner.

It is only through perception of the other that the distinction becomes clear. While the earlier leadership of al-Shabaab made a distinction between the TFG and the Somali people, Godane increasingly began to view them all as enemies. While Ayro and other members of the senior leadership in the nationalist camp were perceived as liberators and leaders (and indeed viewed themselves as such), Godane was perceived as an outsider from the beginning. Al-Shabaab was no longer perceived as fighting for Somalia under his leadership, and Godane increasingly perceived himself as an outsider and those who did not acknowledge his authority as enemies (Sjah, 2014).

It's probable that al-Shabaab's first two strategic objectives began to change during this phase. While the organization still controlled territory and appeared to the rest of the world to be the same, it focused less on liberating Somalia and establishing a new regime and more on destabilizing the surrounding region. The increasing number of attacks on foreign soil were likely intended to coerce the governments contributing troops to AMISOM to change their policies. Thus, the group was moving toward strategic terrorism.

Once al-Shabaab lost Mogadishu, Kismayo, and finally Barawe, the group more obviously reverted back to guerrilla-style attacks and, at least in its military capacity, resembled the al-Shabaab of phase one — only far less popular. The organization's increase in transnational attacks during phase four (August 2011 to present) has been the closet to pure stage one violence that we've seen so far. The violence is clearly intended to manipulate political change in states contributing troops to AMISOM rather than overthrow those regimes. Thus far, Umar has made no substantial changes in the group's tactical operations, leaving some to wonder whether al-Shabaab even wants to govern anymore (Menkhaus, 2016).

Stage Two — Provoking a Response

In the second stage of strategic terrorism, an actor attempts to provoke a reaction from the target. Again, while al-Shabaab's objective was clearly to overthrow the TFG in phase one, it lacked the capacity to do so. By phase two (January 2008–April 2008), the group's tactics had definitely provoked a number of reactions. In February 2008, the U.S. State Department designated al-Shabaab a terrorist organization. Meanwhile, the TFG reacted by striking a deal with the moderate ARS — culminating in June of 2008 with the call for a 90-day ceasefire and the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops. The deal not only isolated al-Shabaab politically, but also the eventual withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in January 2009 deprived the group of its source of popular support and legitimacy.

During phase three (May 2008–July 2011), the July 2010 attacks in Kampala successfully provoked a response from Ugandan forces which generated increased hatred for the TFG if not additional support for al-Shabaab. The same can be said of al-Shabaab's deliberate targeting of aid workers in Kenya during phase four (August 2011 to present) which Nairobi claims is what provoked Operation Linda Nchi — thus sending Kenyan forces across the border into Somalia in October 2011.

Stage Three — Gaining Legitimacy

In the third and final stage of strategic terrorism, an actor attempts to gain legitimacy through either extensive media coverage or through grassroots methods of mobilizing public support.

In phase one, the group had very little need to gain legitimacy with most Somalis. The few public services the group could afford to offer in these early years basically amounted to (1) law enforcement (imposing its own *Salafist* interpretation of *sharia* upon the *Sufi* majority), (2) judiciary (punishing those who violated *sharia*), and (3) a crude form of patronage to smooth troubled clan waters.

While the group's leadership attempted to maximize legitimacy with clan elders, the imposition of *sharia* was actually extremely unpopular, so much so that it had to be strictly enforced or else no one would have obeyed it. Had al-Shabaab not already enjoyed tremendous legitimacy as the

defenders and liberators of Somalia, the Somali public would never have tolerated their strict *Salafi* demands. They were tolerated, however — at least until the Ethiopians pulled out.

The group's limited capacity in these early years also equated to fewer media releases in comparison with later years and a heavy reliance on third party organizations such as Kenya's Muslim Youth Center (MYC) for recruitment outside of Somalia (Gatsiounis, 2013).

By phase two, the group had dramatically increased its capacity to govern, collect taxes, and provide public goods. It also utilized media outlets under its control to promote its version of *sharia* and coopt clan elders. It's important to note, however, that al-Shabaab didn't need to use the media outlets it acquired in this phase primarily to enhance recruitment (although this was, no doubt, an added benefit). The group already enjoyed substantial support in the form of funds and recruits (Dagne, 2010).

The organization's primary use of the media outlets was to disseminate its *Salafist* ideology among the predominantly *Sufi* majority and to promote itself among the clans, again, not to gain legitimacy per se but as a means of promoting its *Salafist* doctrine — distributing information regarding what the new laws were and the consequences of violating them.

During phase three, al-Shabaab relied much more on media outreach than ever before. During these years, Godane made every effort to court al-Qaeda and thus gain legitimacy with foreign *jihadists* rather than with Somalis. By 2009, the organization's recruiting videos had noticeably increased in production quality — featuring foreign fighters, training clips, and scenes recorded in battle which substantially broadened al-Shabaab's recruitment pool beyond Somalia.

Most notably, the releases were narrated in Arabic and English rather than Somali — demonstrating that they were intended for foreign audiences (Harnisch and Zimmerman, 2010; Vidino, 2010). At the same time, the group also increasingly engaged in less governance as it lost territory to the TFG and AMISOM forces. All of these factors indicate that al-Shabaab was steadily moving further away from insurgency and closer to strategic terrorism.

From Near to Far

We can conclude that al-Shabaab did not employ strategic terrorism during its *jihadist* period (phases one and two) under the leadership of Ayro and that it transitioned to strategic terrorism in phase three under Godane and has been employing strategic terrorism in phase four since. Phases three and four constitute the *takfiri* phase, and they represent both a change in the group's ideology and its strategic objectives.

Despite the disorienting effect of al-Shabaab's guerrilla tactics in phase one — and the fact that they provoked a response from the various target governments — neither of these were the primary objective behind the attacks. Al-Shabaab's main goal in phases one and two was to overthrow the TFG, not to effect policy change through violence. This qualified the group as an insurgency.

Furthermore, the Ethiopian occupation already gave the group all the legitimacy that it needed. It didn't need to provoke a response to discredit the target or gain legitimacy for itself, as public opinion was already largely against the occupation and in the group's favor.

In phase two, al-Shabaab began to confront its military enemies in a more conventional manner. It also gained control of large portions of the country and governed quite effectively — albeit for a short time. While the *Sufi* majority in Somalia did not welcome the harsh life imposed upon them by *Salafism*, al-Shabaab benefited from the fact that the group was perceived as the lesser evil when compared to the alternative.

However, once the Ethiopians pulled out, al-Shabaab faced a very different reality. Popular support had already waned considerably as a consequence of the group's change in leadership (and Godane's emphasis on loyalty to the group rather than clan loyalty). Once the foreign occupiers left, popular support (which in many cases was mere toleration) turned to contempt.

We saw a dramatic shift in ideology under the leadership of Godane. With the adoption of the *takfiri* doctrine, the group became much more brutal. As Ethiopian forces pulled out, al-Shabaab fighters moved in and began to impose a strict interpretation of *sharia*. Somalis were no longer willing to tolerate the harsh punishments now that the Ethiopians were gone. When al-Shabaab responded with amputations, stoning of adulterers, and the execution of apostate Muslims, clan politics quickly turned against the group.

Although AMISOM had about 1,600 Ugandan soldiers stationed as peace keepers in Mogadishu since 2007, the Somali public did not resent their presence in Somalia as much as they did the hated Ethiopians. Once the level of AMISOM troops began to escalate to its current level of approximately 22,000, and the atrocities became more regular and wide-spread, public opinion began to shift against AMISOM but not necessarily in favor of al-Shabaab. The continued lack of popular support materialized in ever-reducing levels of funding and fewer recruits. The group subsequently retreated from all of its strategic holdings. Al-Shabaab has since reverted back to guerrilla tactics. We have also witnessed what I argue is a dramatic shift in the group's strategic objectives.

Despite AMISOM forces and U.S. airstrikes (we could also argue because of these two factors), al-Shabaab is still active in much of South Central Somalia. Yet it has not declared a state. The group appears to be content to remain in a stalemate with the Somali government and AMISOM forces.

Stig Hansen suggests that in the case of Mogadishu from 2009 to 2013, the stalemate occurred because al-Shabaab was simply unable to defeat the superior AMISOM forces (Hansen, 2013). Meanwhile AMISOM lacked the mandate to push beyond the capital. Alternatively, Ken Menkhaus argues that al-Shabaab might actually prefer a stalemate because the current situation allows the group to mobilize without creating the need to govern (Menkhaus, 2016). Menkhaus reasons that if al-Shabaab were to take more territory (especially in Mogadishu), it would have to govern, and that would draw it into a number of clan conflicts which the group has learned to avoid.

The point is salient because when al-Shabaab took the TFG stronghold in Baidoa after the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces in January 2009, it inevitably had to negotiate the very complicated web of Somali clan politics which led to the clash with the Ras Kamboni Brigade and a number of other struggles with clan leaders. This challenge put pressure on the group that exposed internal divisions over practical matters of governance.

The overarching rationale upon which strategic theory is based is comprised of three primary assumptions: (1) military force is a dimension of power exercised toward political goals, (2) politics is a game of thrones in which each actor strives to maximize its own power in relation to other actors, and (3) all actors act rationally (Smith, 1991).

Senior leaders such as Ayro were effective in mobilizing Somali resistance against the Ethiopian invasion by appealing to their sense of nationalism. This helped the group to navigate the troubled waters of clan politics. However, according to the first assumption of strategic terrorism, this focus on nationalism betrays more than just the diplomatic ability of the early leadership. Their focus on nationalism and efforts to coopt the various clans also reveal that their true strategic objective was to overthrow the TFG and establish an Islamic government. We did not see Godane exercising his power toward this same political goal.

I have argued that Godane's changes to al-Shabaab were employed out of necessity rather than a true commitment to global *jihad*, and there is certainly ample justification for this claim. In accordance with assumptions two and three above, it makes perfect sense that Godane reacted as he did. In addition to the practical necessities discussed earlier (the need for foreign fighters and the benefits of associating al-Shabaab with al-Qaeda), we can add the likelihood that Godane decided to retreat from the group's territories — not only out of military necessity but also because he realized that Somalia was just too difficult to govern, especially for someone with little or no clan support. More importantly, Godane no doubt realized that governing in Somalia would require more power sharing than he was willing to concede. Even if Godane had been able to garner the support of the clan elders, he clearly did not want to.

If we are to accept Godane's adoption of the *takfiri* doctrine as sincere rather than utilitarian, then in his eyes, everyone that did not accept his version of Islam were infidels — *Sufi* idolaters who deserved to die. How could he ever share power with them? Here we see the same ideology shared by Zarqawi and Baghdadi. We must consider the possibility that al-Shabaab's diminishing military capacity is not the primary reason the group reverted back to guerrilla-style tactics. We must also consider the potential outcome of such a possibility.

If we compare phase one of the group with phase four, the military capacity and the guerrilla-style tactics are both similar. What appears to be different is the goal. In phase one, al-Shabaab strove to consolidate its strength and acquire territory. In phase four it's doing just the opposite. Under Godane, the group went from governing huge swaths of territory to voluntarily retreating in the face of AMISOM forces. One has to question

whether this tactical shift was driven by sheer asymmetric realities on the ground or a new strategic objective.

Perhaps just as al-Qaeda decided to attack the far enemy first, al-Shabaab has also altered its immediate strategic objective from overthrowing the near enemy to coercing the various states contributing AMISOM troops to pull out. Perhaps this is why Godane began to increasingly rely on violence rather than governance as the primary means of obtaining the group's objectives. But this would mean that the group had given up on, or at least put off, its strategic goal of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia. However, this appears to be the case.

If all we consider are the military aspects, then either way, the group is employing sound strategy. By terrorizing the areas it once controlled, laying siege to them by blocking all routes in and out, and attacking AMISOM forces where they are weakest, al-Shabaab is either making the best use of the military strength it has left, or it's following the strategic terrorism playbook chapter and verse.

In the first stage, an actor tries to erode the security of the people in order to make the government look incapable of maintaining order and stability. This is typically attempted through a series of random violent attacks. By yielding towns and cities to AMISOM and SNA forces, the organization is setting the government up for failure as it has neither the resources to govern nor the ability to protect. Its only options are to agree to political concessions, depend on foreign assistance to drive al-Shabaab out, or learn to live with the violence.

In the second stage, an actor attempts to provoke a reaction from the target. In addition to terrorizing Somali targets, al-Shabaab has also increasingly engaged in transnational attacks intended to disorient foreign populations and provoke a response from states contributing AMISOM troops.

N.O. Berry proposes four potential responses. First, a target could potentially overreact by engaging in extralegal responses and thereby discrediting its own legitimacy such as when Ugandan forces retaliated in July 2010 by bombing a residential district in Mogadishu. Another possible reaction is that the target fails to react sufficiently to demonstrate that it is capable of dealing with the threat. Berry calls this reaction "power deflation" (Berry, 1987, p. 10). This appears to be the Somali government's default response, and it plays directly into al-Shabaab's hands.

Alternatively, if al-Shabaab is indeed simply losing ground due to diminishing military capacity, then it's utilizing its assets as best as it can. But to what end? If the organization's strategic objectives are still the same, why would it continue to marginalize itself from the clans and forego the support of the people when it needs them more than ever?

The most likely reason is ideological. The *takfiri* doctrine is the most satisfying explanation as to why al-Shabaab continues to shun the *Sufi* majority even in the face of extermination. Most religious groups that employ strategic terrorism are not willing to compromise (Neumann and Smith, 2005). Therefore, one of two options is probable: (1) the group will either fail to sufficiently escalate the violence to the necessary level to provoke a reaction, or (2) if it is successful in provoking a reaction, the group will lose the support of the people, disintegrate into splinter factions, and/or be annihilated by the target government.

In the case of al-Shabaab, this is precisely what has happened. The organization successfully provoked a reaction — to the extent that a U.S. drone strike took out its leader (Ayro). We then saw the group lose the support of the people (after Ethiopia withdrew its forces in January 2009) and subsequently split into opposing factions. The likelihood that al-Shabaab will succeed in provoking just the right response so as to cost the Somali government a sufficient measure of legitimacy and also garner a measure of legitimacy for itself is highly unlikely.

I suggest that al-Shabaab's strategic objectives have changed from (1) liberating Somalia, (2) establishing an Islamic government, and (3) creating Greater Somalia to (1) destabilizing the entire region in order to coerce the states contributing troops to AMISOM to withdraw their militaries and (2) creating Greater Somalia. I believe that, like al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab has adopted a more sound and realistic strategy of fighting the far enemy given the strength of the near enemy and its own current resources.

The benefits of foregoing the group's original first two goals are multiple. First of all, at least for the present, al-Shabaab can side-step Somali clan politics. Second, *Salafism* is rare enough in Somalia. *Takfiri Salafism,* which promotes the killing of apostates, is a very hard ideology to sell — particularly in Somalia where clan loyalty is so strong. It's much easier for the group to recruit Somalis in surrounding states where non-Somali *Sufis* and *Christians* can be targeted.

Given that Umar appears to be following in Godane's footsteps, it appears that we have witnessed the evolution of al-Shabaab from guerrilla insurgency to strategic terrorism. The true test of the group's new strategic objectives (if they are indeed new) will be the course of action it takes in the future. Does al-Shabaab still want to drive the foreign occupiers out of Somalia? Or is it attempting to draw them in? Will al-Shabaab again pursue an Islamic state in Somalia? Or has the group set its sights on an even bigger prize? Only time will tell.

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[1]U.S. intelligence reports suggest that AIAI provided safe haven for three al-Qaeda operatives following the embassy bombings in 1998 (Marquardt and Shinn, 2009). However, Menkhaus (2004b) points to the facts that (1) no Somalis hold positions in al-Qaeda's top leadership and (2) no Somalis were involved in attacks against Western targets outside of Somalia until 2003. See also Budge (2014).

[2]We can only assume that Amriki was referring to the moderate faction within the ICU that accepted political concessions from the TFG and ultimately accepted man-made borders, because the hardliners within the ICU rejected the existing borders and wanted to establish Greater Somalia.

[3]Ironically, even with all of its global rhetoric, al-Shabaab remains focused on African targets.

[4]There were several such random releases such as the messages of encouragement from bin Laden and Zawahiri in 2006–2007, the video released in September 2008 in which Saleh ali Saleh Nabhan pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda on behalf of Al Shabaab, and Zawahiri's quid pro quo in November of the same year. Bin Laden released a video in March 2009, denouncing the ARS and accusing Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed of abandoning Islam to partner with apostates. Al-Shabaab released a message in February 2010 stating that it would ally itself with al-Qaeda. Zawahiri released a video in September 2015 claiming that, according to a correspondence from Godane, al-Shabaab is not interested in becoming an affiliate of IS. However, there is little evidence of actual correspondence between the two groups.

Chapter 6

Nigeria: A Fight between Grasshoppers

A fight between grasshoppers is a joy to the crow…
— Nigerian proverb

The Oil Curse

In previous chapters, we've identified al-Qaeda as a *jihadist* organization that employs strategic terrorism and IS as a *takfiri* group that does not. Given that Boko Haram has essentially pledged *bay'ah* to both al-Qaeda and IS, it's important to assess whether these alliances have had any real impact on the group's strategic objectives and/or its strategy.

Because the strategic goals of Boko Haram cannot be fully understood without a minimal knowledge of the region's colonial and modern history, this chapter begins by discussing the history of Nigeria. Second, we examine the various groups that have appeared in Nigeria since independence and analyze their strategic objectives in an effort to identify any continuity between them.

With more than 177 million people, Nigeria has the largest population of any state in Africa and the eighth largest population in the world. Nigeria's oil has also made it a powerful economic player. Furthermore, the state is influential politically, playing a key role in resolving regional disputes and contributing to United Nations Peacekeeping missions. Nigeria is comprised of more than 350 ethnic groups that speak over 250 languages

(Ukiwo, 2005). Much of the tension in Nigeria between the Muslim North and the Christian South is actually more about control of the country's natural resources than it is about religion per se. To the extent that it's religious at all is due to the fact that conflict erupts between groups of different ethnic, geographic, and religious identities over competition for scarce resources (Ukiwo, 2003).

For example, the various inhabitants of the Niger Delta have been agitating for greater access to the Delta's oil wealth for decades. Endemic corruption prevails as Nigeria's ethnic divisions struggle over power and limited resources and corrupt government officials line their pockets with state oil revenues. Transparency International listed Nigeria in the top 20% of states for endemic corruption (Riaño *et al*., 2010).

More recently, Nigeria has been placed 140th on a list of 175 countries — with 175 being the most corrupt (Transparency International, 2013). With its infrastructure in shambles and its political system unstable, the welfare of Nigeria is a critical factor in the future of the West African sub-region — and arguably all of Africa as well (Thomson, 2012).

Providing more than $60 billion per year in revenue, oil comprises roughly 85% of Nigeria's GDP. The enormous influx of foreign capital — combined with endemic corruption — has resulted in the atrophy of economic growth in other sectors, making Nigeria increasingly more and more reliant on foreign imports.

The deteriorating economic base has hit the traditional sectors of fishing and farming especially hard, forcing mass migration to city centers as rural Nigerians seek employment in manufacturing. Cotton — the economic mainstay in the North — has also been affected, causing a two-fold collapse in both agriculture and the textile industry. In the economic vacuum, a host of illicit activities — from prostitution to kidnapping and human trafficking — have taken root (International Crisis Group, 2010).

Oil exploitation in Nigeria's Niger Delta, and the environmental degradation it has caused, has been labeled blatant neocolonialization by the African mass media — and with good cause (Uche, 1991). The government sells extraction rights to the oil companies, which exploit these rights without any accountability to the indigenous peoples affected by their activity.

What's worse, the local people have little legal redress against the powerful oil companies (Aluko, 2004). The government — both officially

and unofficially — profits substantially more from the revenue it receives from oil companies than it does from any taxes paid by the people. Therefore, it's unlikely that the situation will change any time in the foreseeable future (Mehler, 2006).

Public outcry against the neocolonial activities of the multinational oil companies (MNOCs) and the Nigerian government has been great (Ikelegbe, 2006; Omeje, 2006). Nigeria has been referred to as a "black hole of corruption" where its citizens are sucked into "perpetual economic slavery" (Olaleye-Oruene, 1998, p. 233).

With little political representation, public protest remains the only means available for effecting political change for the average citizen (Hill, 2010). When peaceful protests were violently quashed by the government, armed militias rose up in their place. Initially the militias engaged in uncoordinated sporadic attacks, but these have since evolved into more sophisticated and planned assaults. In the last decade alone, militia attacks and oil theft combined have cost MNOCs roughly 50% of their total production from 2.6 million barrels per day in 2005 to 1.3 million barrels per day in 2009 (Ibid.).

MNOCs and the Nigerian government have responded with increasingly brutal crackdowns, leading to even fiercer and more sophisticated attacks by the militias (Ukiwo, 2009). Catastrophic oil spills are blamed on the negligence of the oil companies on the one hand and on sabotage by the militias on the other.

Meanwhile, the resulting environmental degradation of the Niger Delta and the economic marginalization of its inhabitants grows worse every day. The common perception of most Nigerians is that the alliance between the MNOCs and corrupt government officials is criminal in nature, raping, and pillaging the land until there's simply nothing left (Joab-Peterside, 2007).

Because the strategic goals of Boko Haram cannot be fully understood without a minimal knowledge of the region's colonial and modern history, this chapter begins by discussing the history of Nigeria and exploring how the Nigerian population became so divided. Second, we examine the various militant groups that have appeared in Nigeria since independence and analyze their strategic objectives in an effort to demonstrate the continuity between them. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief analysis.

History of Nigeria

Uthman dan Fodio, who claimed to be a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, led a Fulani insurgency against the Hausa rulers of his day, claiming that they were not Islamic enough. In reaction to growing tensions with the ruler of Gobir, dan Fodio and his followers relocated to Gudu, a border community west of Gobir.

Uthman dan Fodio accused the Hausa ruling class of *bid'a* (innovation), *takfir* (unbelief) and *muwālāt* (friendly relations with unbelievers). He declared them as "enemies of God," and in 1804, dan Fodio launched his *jihad* from Gudu and established the Sokoto Caliphate (Griswold, 2010).

During the years 1804–1808, the Sokoto Caliphate began to coalesce and eventually expanded into what are now Northern Nigeria, Benin, Niger, and Cameroon. The Sultan of Sokoto declared *sharia* and united the people under the banner of Islam (Burns, 1969; International Crisis Group, 2010).

Although this was a golden age for Islam in the region, there were problems as well (Cook, 2011). In 1807, the British abolished the slave trade. While commerce in slaves continued in the region for another four decades, trade in other commodities greatly expanded as well — thus leading to fierce competition over control of the resource-rich Niger Delta. Revolts and competition between *Sufi* rivals marred the peaceful rule of the *caliphate* (Dike, 1956).

In 1861, the British annexed Lagos as a crown colony. By 1885, they had established the Oil Rivers Protectorate in what is now Southeastern Nigeria.[1] A year later, the Royal Niger Company (RNC) began to monopolize all trade in the Niger basin and continued to do so until 1900 when its charter was revoked. Power struggles between the traditional political leaders in the Delta and the RNC resulted in the deportation of three rulers and the deposition of King Koko of Brass.[2] Legislation enacted in 1887, 1907, and 1914 granted ownership to the state as well as a monopoly on oil exploration rights to Shell and British Petroleum (BP) (Falola and Heaton, 2008).

In 1903, the *Sokoto Caliphate* succumbed to British colonial rule. Even though the British ruled indirectly, they made significant political and cultural changes. Most notably, the British made changes to the judicial system as they perceived *sharia* to be too harsh in many instances.

Most Muslims at the time (particularly those in the North) viewed the suspension of *sharia* as more than a mere aspect of British colonial rule — they perceived it to be an imposition of Christian principles. With the already tense relationship between the Muslim North and the Christian South, this was an unwelcome development for Nigerian Muslims.

Another reality that would have long-lasting effects involved the Christian missionary schools that were allowed in the South but denied in the North. The quality of Western education combined with the future economic development of the South — as compared to the relative stagnation in the North — has continued to be a politically divisive issue to this day (International Crisis Group, 2010).

In 1914, the Northern and Southern Nigerian protectorates were artificially joined together. For a time, WWI served as a distraction to domestic issues as Nigerian troops served in WWI alongside the British. After the war, the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) was founded — followed in 1923 by the Clifford Constitution which gave Nigerians the right to elect representatives for the first time. The Clifford Constitution opened a Pandora's box, however, and soon a slew of organizations began to agitate for more rights and greater freedom.[3]

In 1945, Nigerian labor unions organized a General Strike — leading to Nigeria's first Ten Year Plan. The Richards Constitution was enacted in 1946, setting the stage for a future independent federal republic and dividing Nigeria into three regions (North, West, and East). It was followed by the MacPherson Constitution in 1951 and the Lyttleton Constitution in 1954 which established a federal government and allocated certain powers to regional authorities (Balogun, 1983).

The minority groups in these peripheral areas feared that the majority groups would use that power to marginalize them (Sklar, 2004). It's commonly observed that this is precisely what happened. This concentration of power and resources in the hands of the few generated resentment and eventually violent backlash. The ethnic militias that later emerged — and the violence that they engaged in — can be attributed to the political, economic, and social marginalization that began decades earlier (Agbu, 2004).

This brief history of colonial Nigeria demonstrates that tensions have been brewing long before modern realities took shape. Beginning with the abolishment of the slave trade in 1807 and the introduction of outside

competition over Nigeria's natural resources, ethnic and religious rivalries heightened and grew exponentially worse as the British artificially joined their Northern and Southern Nigerian protectorates into one political and economic entity.

Following the concentration of power and resources in 1954, another unwelcome development occurred in Nigeria in 1956 when oil was discovered in the Niger Delta, and Western MNOCs began clamoring for access. The Shell–BP monopoly was broken in 1959, and other oil companies gained extraction rights. Much like today, powerful corporate interests operated in the region with little or no state oversight. By then, the Sultan was little more than a symbol of a bygone era. Still, the Sokoto Caliphate stood as a reminder of the role that Islam and *sharia* once played in uniting the people. Many today — particularly in the North — continue to see Islam as the answer to Nigeria's problems (Harnischfeger, 2004; Wakili, 2009).

Nigeria gained its independence on 1 October 1960, and the predominantly Christian South was officially united with the Muslim North under a secular constitution (Agbiboa, 2013). The influences of Islam and Hausa–Fulani culture began to spread across the country. Afraid that the Muslim North was gaining the upper hand, a military coup led by Christian Igbo officers executed Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa on 15 January 1966, and General John Aguiyi-Ironsi took power. Six months later, another coup on 29 July — led by Hausa–Fulani officers from the North — ousted Aguiyi-Ironsi and instituted General Yakubu Gowon as leader (Herskovits, 2007).

The military coups in 1966 introduced a centralized political and economic system which marginalized religious and ethnic minorities in the peripheries. Many protested. When peaceful assemblies failed, demonstrators vandalized oil facilities, obstructed operations, and even kidnapped oil company personnel. The military governments under generals Aguiyi-Ironsi and Gowon and those who followed (Murtala Mohammed, Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, and Sani Abacha) all responded with brute force (Douglas, 2004).

Nigeria's short-lived experiment in artificial nationalism was soon trumped by the impulse toward ethnic and religious regionalism (Hill, 2010). In 1966, the Niger Delta attempted to secede over contested oil rights. A year later, civil war broke out over the failed secession of Biafra

and lasted for 3 years (1967–1970). Following the civil war, the military government passed a series of laws claiming ownership of oil and gas for the Nigerian state.[4]

In 1971, Nigeria joined OPEC and Nigeria's economy boomed due to the rising price of oil. Many believed that the future would be brighter. Nigeria's many diverse ethnic groups hoped that they would finally receive equal political, economic, and social representation.

However, the problems facing the young nation only grew worse as corruption increased. When their expectations were not met, many engaged in peaceful protests. When these peaceful protests were violently put down, militia groups such as the Ijaw National Congress (INC), the Egbesu Boys of Africa, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and many others emerged (Dappa-Biriye, 1995).

A series of military coups eventually led to a civilian government under President Alhaji Shehu Shugari in 1979.[5] By then, Nigeria's economic boom had turned to bust as national debt soared and oil prices plummeted. Civilian government didn't last long. On 31 December 1983, General Muhammadu Buhari led a military coup and took over at the helm. Buhari was unable to affect economic recovery and was himself overthrown by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida on 27 August 1985. Babangida imposed a structural adjustment program but failed to improve the economy.

Controversy arose in 1986 when the government secretly decided to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Christian South protested the decision, claiming that membership would ultimately affect the state's secular constitution. Those in favor of membership in the OIC argued that if membership in the British Commonwealth (which they claimed was a Christian organization) didn't affect Nigeria's secular status, neither would membership in the OIC.[6]

A year later, Muslim members of Nigeria's Constituent Assembly agitated for the establishment of a *sharia* court of appeals — a move which would first require revising the constitution. Christian opposition to the proposition was so great that President Babangida was forced to concede — despite membership in the OIC — that Nigeria remained a secular state and the constitution would not be rewritten to include *sharia*. Babangida's official efforts to maintain peace were insufficient, however. Between 1987

and 1992, more than 3,000 people were killed — mostly in Northern states — in clashes between Christians and Muslims (Oba, 2004).

Babangida decided to allow democratic presidential elections, and on 12 June 1993, M. K. O. Abiola — a Yoruba Muslim — was named president. The election results were immediately challenged and annulled. Chaos and increased violence followed. Babangida stepped in and appointed Ernest Shonekan as head of an Interim Governing Council (IGC) on 27 August (Omoruyi, 1999).

General Sani Abacha led a military coup on 17 November 1993 and overthrew the IGC. Abacha was a tyrant and a world-class thief. He's believed to have stolen 4.3 billion during his short 5 years in office. Not surprisingly, civilian unrest mounted. Abacha died in June 1998, leaving General Abdulsalami Abu-Bakr in power. Abu-Bakr declared a transfer to civilian government, and Olusegun Obasanjo — a former army general and a Christian — assumed office in 1999 but failed to improve economic and political conditions (Ogbondah, 2000; Sklar *et al*., 2006).

To the average Nigerian Muslim, the answer seemed clear enough: the country needed to return to a government modeled after the Sokoto Caliphate. As the economy worsened, Islamic fundamentalism became more politically pronounced. On 27 October 1999, Governor Alhadji Ahmed Sani proclaimed *sharia* in the state of Zamfara. Eleven other Northern states quickly followed suit (Dickson, 2005).

Some estimate that in the 1990s as many as 10,000 people lost their lives due to fighting between Muslims and Christians. However, the majority of the conflict was over political power and control of economic resources — not religion per se (Maier, 2009). The main issue was that 9 of the past 11 rulers had been Northern Muslims, and the circle of elites was well established. When Obasanjo took office, he purged a number of these Muslim elites — and that did not sit well with them.

To the extent that any fighting in Nigeria is truly over religious issues, it's the result of disingenuous entrepreneurs politicizing religion toward their own ends. Regardless of which group takes the spoils — whether it be Muslim elites or Christian elites — the average Nigerian receives very, very little if anything at all (Usman, 1979).

Today, despite tremendous oil wealth, the Nigerian government still fails to provide basic human services to the majority of its people. Nigeria's coming of age has been marked by military coups, civil unrest, and

violence. The military government (1960–1999) officially stepped down, and Nigeria has now enjoyed more than a decade of civilian leadership. But every election during civilian rule has been tainted with unrest, voter intimidation, violence, and political assassinations (Thomson, 2012). In 2011, roughly 800 people were killed, and over 65,000 were displaced due to violence in protest of the election results (Blanchard, 2015) — not exactly what Samuel Huntington would refer to as a consolidated democracy.

The 2015 presidential election was no exception (Vogt and McGroarty, 2015). The presidential elections were originally scheduled for the 14th and 28th of February; however, election officials postponed the elections for 6 weeks after security officials insisted that they were not prepared to guarantee security at the polls. The military required the additional 6 weeks to carry out attacks against Boko Haram strongholds (Blanchard, 2015). Even with the added security and preparation, more than 100 people were killed at polling stations around the country (Winsor, 2015).

Nigeria faces a myriad of security challenges. Militant groups, insurgents, and persistent violence increased substantially after the military officially stepped down in 1999. Civilian authorities have proved unable to control the ethnic and religious conflict that continues to plague the country. The transition to democracy in Nigeria spawned civil strife and mass protests as new ethnic and religious groups clamored for political space. When peaceful means failed, militias sprang up and special interest groups resorted to acts of terror to achieve their goals (Ikelegbe, 2001). The result has been a humanitarian crisis and a direct assault against the stability and security of the state (Bamidele, 2012).

Rather than moving toward greater unity, the country has progressively divided with the number of states increasing from 19 to 30 and the number of local authorities more than doubling. Some fear that Nigeria will suffer balkanization as the political will to remain united gives way to religious and ethnic separatism. Armed militant groups, rebellion in the Niger Delta, and the ongoing North/South divide continue to present insurmountable obstacles to the country's hope of unity (Kaplan, 1994; Stremlau, 2015).

The events of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing Long War on Terror (LWoT) provided a unique opportunity for many African leaders to persecute human rights and pro-democracy groups, greatly restrict civil

society, and criminalize any and all forms of opposition by simply labeling it "terrorism" (Bah, 2005).

The Nigerian state has a history of branding political opponents and civil society groups alike as "terrorists."[7] Many of these organizations were guilty of nothing more than agitating for government accountability, rule of law, and basic freedoms such as the right to assemble, freedom of the press, and the right to a trial (Olukoshi, 1998).

Two Main Types of Militant Groups in Nigeria

I argue that there are two main reasons that actors employ militant violence in Nigeria. The first is to obtain economic and social equality, and the second is to replace the corrupt Nigerian government and institute *sharia*. The actors in the first category employ strategic terrorism as they attempt to use violence to coerce a change in the Nigerian government's policies. Those in the second more closely fit guerrilla insurgencies as their strategic goal is to overthrow the government and/or institute a new or additional form of governance.

As the Nigerian Federation became more decentralized, each region developed its own form of cultural self-determination. For the Igbo in the Southeast, self-determination emerged as a demand for confederation. For the Yoruba in the Southwest, it took the form of Yoruba nationalism. In the Muslim North, self-determination equated to advocacy for *sharia* as an opportunity to regain a measure of influence in the ever increasing secular Nigerian Federation (Mazrui, 2005).

There are many armed groups in Nigeria serving either as vigilantes or as quasipolice units in areas where there is no police protection. Still more groups function as armed militias protesting the presence of MNOCs, the exploitation of Nigeria's natural resources, and the environmental degradation that goes unpunished year after year in places such as the Niger Delta (HRW, 2002). While there have been far too many violent clashes to discuss in one place, this section examines a few of the key groups in each region of the country.[8]

Militant Groups Employing Strategic Terrorism

This section takes a look at groups in Nigeria that have engaged in strategic terrorism in order to either coerce the government into policy changes or — for some — gain a certain level of autonomy or independence. These groups primarily sought to obtain economic and social equality and a measure of control over the vast natural resource wealth of the country. The 2009 Niger Delta Amnesty Program was effective in minimizing violence stemming from these groups until President Buhari reduced the funding for the program. We have since seen a resurgence of violence in the region.

In the first stage of strategic terrorism, an actor tries to erode the security of the people in order to make the government look incapable of maintaining order and stability. This is typically attempted through a series of random violent attacks. The primary focus of this stage is disorientation, not winning hearts and minds (Neumann and Smith, 2005). In Nigeria, however, the actors that have engaged in strategic terrorism have done so largely in order to make the government look incapable of maintaining order and stability *for the oil companies*.

Furthermore, most of the groups discussed below first attempted to affect a measure of environmental, political, and economic change through non-violent means. It was only after the government and militias controlled by the oil companies responded with brutal force that many resorted to violence themselves. “Nothing radicalizes a people faster than the unleashing of undisciplined security forces on its towns and villages” (Woodworth, 2001, p. 7).

Rational actors face a dilemma in this first stage of strategic terrorism (Neumann and Smith, 2005). They must make the violence threatening enough and destabilizing enough to render the general public open to accepting the political concessions demanded without tipping the scales of public opinion against the perpetrators of the violence.

Due to the horrific environmental damage in the Niger Delta, however, most residents just want the oil companies out of Nigeria altogether. Therefore, we can argue that the typical dilemma faced by most rational actors in this situation largely does not apply as there’s little or no concern of tipping the scales of public opinion against the perpetrators of the violence. Much like the Ethiopians in Somalia, the oil companies are

perceived as foreign occupiers, and in this sense, Nigeria offers a best-case scenario for strategic terrorism.

In the second stage of strategic terrorism, an actor attempts to provoke a reaction from the target. One response is that a target could retaliate with excessive force. We'll discover that this is precisely how the Nigerian government has responded time and time again to threats against the oil companies operating within its borders. The welfare of the people has clearly taken second priority to the interests of the energy conglomerates. In this section, we'll explore each actor by geographic area.

Militant Groups in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta is an oil-rich region in Southeastern Nigeria where most of the state's revenue is generated. Yet, it's home to some of the poorest communities in the world. If the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta has been a mixed blessing for Nigeria, it's been a curse for the inhabitants of this region. Since 1956, oil exploration and production negatively impacted the people of the Delta. Oil pipelines invade communities, encroach upon people's homes, crisscross farmlands, traverse rivers, and line roads.

Oil spills are disastrous as the oil seeps into fresh water, topsoil, and homes — leaving nothing of value in its wake. Water is left unusable, soil is worthless, and homes are destroyed. The air is also polluted as smoke and fumes from gas flares cause respiratory disease and other health problems. Roads become death traps as oil seepage makes them slick. Yet the MNOCs are not held accountable, nor does the government help the people in any way. Rather, the government protects the oil companies (Ishisone, 2004; Ekanola, 2007).

For example, on 30 October 1990, in Umuechem, farmers and fishermen were engaged in a peaceful demonstration to demand compensation for oil pollution that destroyed their farmland and killed all the fish. The men were unarmed. Still the army attacked with gunfire and teargas. Fifty people were shot to death, 550 houses were destroyed, and the attackers (also called the "kill and go") looted livestock and valuables (Pegg, 1999).

Another example occurred in May 1994, when Nigerian police attacked a group of protesters, sank 16 boats, killed three people, and injured dozens

more (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2008).

The MNOCs also use the "kill and go" as well as hire their own militias to crack down on protestors. Chevron, for example, has committed numerous atrocities in this manner. One such account occurred on 28 May 1998. Residents of the Ilaje community were protesting peacefully when Chevron sent armed men from another tribe to quash the demonstration. Chevron paid the men an estimated 15 m naira. Even though the oil companies are empowered to dispatch the army and military police to crush demonstrations at their discretion, it's claimed that Chevron sent the tribal members rather than state security forces to make it look like ethnic conflict rather than a government crackdown (Ekanola, 2007).

My friends in Nigeria have a saying, "A fight between grasshoppers is a joy to the crow." When I once asked what this means, a friend told me that "crows are smart. They'll fly over a rock and repeatedly drop a nut until it cracks open. They sit on electric wires to stay warm when it's cold. The oil companies are like crows. They're smart enough to blame the Nigerian people for everything — especially the killing."

Accounts of these atrocities abound, most detailing gruesome murders, rape, and unnecessary carnage (Ikelegbe, 2005). While there are far too many accounts to list individually, the main point to be understood is that the inhabitants of the Niger Delta quickly learned that peaceful demonstrations were futile and dangerous. Armed militias formed and began to engage in guerrilla-style attacks. A common occurrence in the Niger Delta prior to the 2009 amnesty was the kidnapping and ransom of multinational oil company employees. Ethnic militias also attacked and/or blockaded oil installations in an effort to disrupt oil production.

While kidnapping oil company employees and disrupting oil production hardly constitute acts of terrorism in and of themselves, the strategic objective behind them does. These acts were intended to intimidate other oil workers, coerce the government to grant affected communities a share of the oil revenue, and/or convince the MNOCs that it was no longer profitable to drill in the Niger Delta (Manby, 1999).

In 1993 alone, Shell Oil Company lost over 12 million barrels of crude oil due to disruption by ethnic militias (Quaker-Dokubo, 2000). There's suspicion that at least some of these armed groups were mere mercenaries, kidnapping foreign oil workers for a share of the ransom — much like pirates have done (Cesarz *et al*., 2003). But for the most part, the groups

consisted of disgruntled ethnic minority members who lost both their livelihood and their homes due to oil pollution (Quaker-Dokubo, 2000).

On the whole, these groups all demanded basically the same things: control of the resources within their respective territories, compensation for past and future extraction, and environmental protection (Vickers, 2000). There have been too many such instances to address in detail. Many involved nothing more than militia attacks against oil installations, the kidnapping of MNOC officials and oil workers, or the blockade of oil rigs. Some were antigovernment and/or anti-imperial protests gone awry. Still more involved a combination of the above (Joab-Peterside, 2007).

The military government's (1966–1999) response to such organizations was harsh. However, the Obasanjo administration (1999–2007) was far more brutal. Obasanjo increased the extraction of oil greatly in an effort to maximize revenue. He also increased the number of oil companies drilling in Nigeria so as to create leverage with the big Western oil companies.

As protests multiplied, the administration cracked down on the demonstrators — branding them terrorists and establishing the military Joint Task Force to crush them. The Nigerian government also purchased 12 fighter jets from China to be used in its fight against groups in the Niger Delta. China agreed to sell the jets after the United States refused (Obi, 2008). Below is a sampling of the groups that emerged in the Niger Delta.[9]

The Ijaw National Congress (INC)

The Ijaw comprise Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group, and they occupy the coastal regions of Southern Nigeria. Technically, Ijaw groups such as the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) fall under the authority of the Ijaw National Congress (INC). More recently, however, the younger and more militant Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) has taken hold of the reins (Obi, 2010).

Ijaw militants cooperate across a number of Ijaw organizations including, but not limited to, the IYC, EBA, INC, and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF). Collectively, the Ijaw drafted the Kaiama Declaration on 11 December 1998, outlining Ijaw nationalist goals. The basis of the Kaima Declaration is that the land and natural resources within Ijaw territory belong to the Ijaw people. The state cannot, therefore, grant

extraction rights to oil companies and other foreign interests without Ijaw consent.

The Ijaw complain of "sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and psychological deprivations" and insist that the quality of life of the Ijaw people is "deteriorating as a result of utter neglect, suppression, and marginalization visited on Ijaws by the alliance of the Nigerian state and transnational oil companies." The declaration further observes that "the political crisis in Nigeria is mainly about the struggle for the control of oil mineral resources" and demands the immediate withdrawal of all foreign interests from Ijaw territory (Ijaw Youths of the Niger Delta, 1998).

The Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA)

Egbesu means truth and justice, and it's also the Ijaw god of war. Like all Niger Delta militias, EBA demands control of the oil within Ijaw lands. EBA made headlines when it engaged in urban combat with the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC) in Ajegunle — a suburb of Lagos. The OPC, which is ethnically Yoruba, allegedly killed some Ijaw youths whom they thought were armed robbers. Lagos is predominantly Yoruba, and it's believed that the incident was as much about territory as it was about protection (Maykuth, 1999).

EBA is considered one of the most powerful militias in the Niger Delta (Carroll, 2006). The group has attacked oil installations, kidnapped oil workers, and targeted Nigerian officials (Chikwem, 2005).

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is not a formal organization but a loose association of multiple Ijaw youth militias that have collectively claimed credit for a number of attacks (Ukiwo, 2007).

On 11 January 2006, MEND attacked a Shell installation, kidnapped four oil workers, and held them captive for 19 days. On 15 January, MEND attacked the Benisede oil flow station and killed 14 soldiers and two civilians. On 18 February of the same year, militants associated with

MEND attacked a Shell terminal at Escravos, blew up two pipelines and an oil tanker, and abducted nine foreign oil workers. The attack was allegedly in retaliation for a government crackdown in which gunships bombed a barge in Okerenkoko — an Ijaw community in the Western Delta. As a result of these attacks, oil production in the Delta dropped by approximately 500,000 barrels per day as prices climbed. Encouraged by its impact, MEND claimed that it would one day stop Nigerian oil production altogether (Ukiwo, 2007).

On 29 April 2006, MEND exploded a car bomb near the Warri oil refinery. The explosion was intended as a warning to Chinese oil companies to stay out of the region. MEND further threatened to attack Chinese oil workers who remained in the Delta, stating that the Chinese government was placing its citizens in MEND's line of fire by investing in stolen oil (Daily, 2006).

The explosion coincided with four new drilling licenses granted to Chinese oil firms and the visit of the Chinese president, Hu Jintao, to Nigeria. In December 2006, MEND emailed several foreign news agencies warning that it planned to explode more car bombs in the Delta. It detonated one at a Shell compound and another at an Agip installation in Port Harcourt (Obi, 2008).

MEND struck a temporary truce with the government just after the April 2007 general elections when the newly elected president signed the Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Agreement. The truce broke down in December 2007, however, after MEND claimed to have uncovered a secret plan by the government to engage in talks as a ploy to gather senior MEND officials together in order to wipe them out. It's estimated that in 2007 alone, MEND cost Shell, Agip, and Chevron a combined total of 675,000 barrels per day — or roughly 27% of Nigeria's daily output (Ianaccone, 2007).

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) represents one of the smallest ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta (Obi, 2008). The Ogoni people of the Niger Delta have lost most of their farming and fishing

livelihood due to the environmental degradation caused by Shell Oil's operations in the area. Shell has been extracting oil in the Niger Delta since 1958 and accounts for 50% of Nigeria's total oil production.

In addition to frequent and catastrophic oil spills, continual degradation occurs from oil wells, pipelines, gas flares, and chemical gas fogs that pollute the soil, contaminate the water, and defile the air. There has been on average 190 oil spills per year in the Niger Delta between 1989 and 1996 — each spill averaging over 319,000 gallons of oil. One Lagos newspaper reported that by 2001, 4,835 oil spills poured nearly 2.4 million barrels of crude oil in the Niger Delta (Watts, 2004).

Particularly problematic is the increasing number of old, rusted, leaking pipelines that seep oil continually and often burst. Broken pipes are regularly blamed on saboteurs and often go days or longer before being fixed. An exploded pipe flooded the village of Jesse in October 1998 and killed over 700 people (Darkwah, 2010).

Humans and livestock alike continue to die from polluted drinking water and cholera while many others develop respiratory illnesses due to the fumes produced by constant gas flaring. Yet according to Nigerian law, oil companies are not legally responsible to fix pipelines broken as an act of sabotage (Johansen, 2010).

The unequal distribution of wealth is unimaginable in this region. Most Ogonis lack electricity and running water, yet billions of dollars in oil are extracted from the region every year. The area is home to more than 100 oil wells, multiple refineries, and petrochemical complexes — yet some 500,000 Ogoni live with little or no infrastructure and share just five physicians among them.

It should come as no surprise that oil — and even portions of pipeline — is routinely stolen. A 25-foot section of pipeline sells for roughly $100 — which is more than what most Ogonis could earn in a month. Those who protest the injustice are arrested, beaten, or gunned down by military helicopters provided by the oil companies (Obi, 2010).

MOSOP was organized in 1990, and both an Ogoni flag and a national anthem were created. MOSOP also drafted the Ogoni Bill of Rights which demanded that the Ogoni people be allowed to control their own political, economic, and environmental affairs (MOSOP, 1992).

The Ogoni claim that their rights "have not only been usurped; they have been misused and abused, turning Nigeria into a hell on earth for the

Ogoni and similar ethnic minorities" who have been forced to become "perpetual debtors" (Ibid., p. 1). The Ogoni also allege that "the ethnic policies of successive federal and state governments are gradually pushing the Ogoni people to slavery and possible extinction" (Ibid., p. 5).

The draft accuses Shell Oil of genocide. This attracted the attention of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Through MOSOP's efforts, the problems associated with the Niger Delta have been communicated across Nigeria and throughout the world. The organization challenged the status quo of power in the Delta region.

More than 300,000 Ogonis gathered in the village of Bori to protest the presence of Shell Oil and make known that it was not welcome in the Niger Delta. The protests disrupted oil production until the Nigerian police and military put it down. In the decade that followed, thousands of Ogoni were killed and more than three dozen villages were completely destroyed (Na′allah, 1998).

While the Nigerian government denies committing egregious acts of violence against the Ogoni and blames it on interethnic conflict, Human Rights Watch interviewed a number of Ogoni victims and concluded that government forces were involved in many of the incidents (Baehr *et al*., 1995).

David Ogula conducted a survey of Niger Delta residents concerning their situation, the government, and the MNOCs (Ogula, 2008). The respondents reported feeling angry, disrespected, deserted, neglected, defeated, discouraged, and helpless. Their perception of the government and the MNOCs is that they're greedy, corrupt, and totally disinterested in the people's welfare. A few of the respondents expressed hope that, if the government and the MNOCs were willing to compromise, the community would work with them. But most expressed a complete lack of faith in the government and MNOCs and said they had no resources left even if the opportunity to cooperate ever did present itself.

The Niger Delta Volunteer Force (*NDVF*)

During colonial rule, the British divided Nigeria into three administrative regions according to the three major ethnic districts: the Igbo in the Southeast, the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Hausa–Fulani in the North.

While somewhat respecting existing ethnic divisions, the British practice of divide and rule exacerbated ethnic cleavages among the main groups and agitated both perceived and real domination of minorities by majority populations (Nte, 2011).

Competition and animosity between groups continued after independence. The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta created the impetus for minorities to demand equal representation, an equal share in the resources and environmental protection for their lands. When equality was refused, these groups began to agitate for autonomy (Ejobowah, 2000).

The first violent attempt at achieving regional autonomy of the Niger Delta came in February 1966 when the NDVF attempted to secede from Nigeria. The failed attempt was led by Isaac Adaka Boro, a member of the Ijaw minority who worried that the new military government — led by an Igbo general — would dominate the delta and marginalize the Ijaw socially, economically, and politically. In his autobiography, Boro wrote that the Ijaws were "clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivation. Strangers in our own country! Inevitably, therefore, the day would have to come for us to fight for our long denied right to self-determination" (Boro, 1982, p. 31).

Boro and his coconspirators were arrested and sentenced to death. However, they were released from prison when military officers from the Hausa–Fulani in the North led another coup. In 1967, the new military government established 12 states — three of which were in the Niger Delta (Rivers State, Southeast State, and Midwest State). Boro and his men fought in the civil war on the side of the federal government — not because they had an interest in preventing the Biafran forces from seceding but because they feared that the Igbo rebels would take control of the Niger Delta oil fields if they were successful (Onduku, 2001).

Hoping that the new military government might be the lesser of two evils, Boro backed the federal government out of fear that the Igbo rebels would steal their share of the oil revenues if successful. Though the Igbo rebels were not successful, Boro's fears came to pass anyway — not via the Igbo rebels but at the hands of the federal government which increasingly withheld more and more of the oil revenues while minority shares dropped from 50% in the 1960s to only 3% in the 1980s (Boro, 1982).

Their shrinking share in the oil revenues — combined with environmental degradation and the subsequent loss of other traditional

means of earning a living — caused many residents of the Delta to move to Port Hartcourt in search of alternative employment. Still others engaged in theft and other illicit trades while many more protested and eventually took up arms. Politicians (both incumbents and challengers) also hired various militant groups to intimidate voters, assassinate political opponents, and provide protection against militias hired by the opposition (Joab-Peterside, 2007).

Other Militant Groups in Southeastern Nigeria

Other militant groups in Southeastern Nigeria are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Bakassi Boys, and the Niger Delta Avengers (NGA).

The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

MASSOB is an Igbo group from the Southeastern region of Nigeria. It was organized in 2000 by Ralph Uwazurike — a lawyer, civil rights activist and follower of Odumegwu Ojukwu who led the rebels in the Biafra Civil War. On 22 May 2000, MASSOB raised its flag in Aba, Abia state to symbolically proclaim its independence. When federal troops arrived to put down the demonstration, Uwazurike officially presented them with MASSOB's "Declaration of Demand for a Sovereign State of Biafra from the People and Government of Nigeria," which among other things protested the imposition of *sharia* in the Northern states and the federal government's silence over the murder of over 5,000 Nigerians who resisted it. Uwazurike maintains that MASSOB emerged out of the marginalization of the Igbo people and the inadequate representation they receive at the federal level (Agbu, 2004).

The group operates its "Biafra House" in Washington, DC from which it coordinates its international activities. In its 2001 "Message to Biafrans," MASSOB states that:

1. The Annang, Efik, Ibibio, Igbo, Ijaw, Ogoja, Ogoni, Isan, Isoko, Urhobo, Itsekiri, and other ethnic groups in and closely associated with Biafra are not a free people. They are under occupation by Nigeria and are in slave-like bondage.
2. The Nigerian Governments that have occupied Biafra for thirty-three years have bludgeoned Biafrans into a state of profound despair, invidious self-hatred, and debilitating hopelessness. These despotic oppressors will never relinquish their stranglehold on Biafrans willingly.
3. The people of Biafra have no choice but to wrest control of their Nation and her people from Nigeria or risk the cataclysm of physical and psychological destruction and ultimate annihilation. This very frightening outcome is transforming into a horrific reality as each day passes.

The message also declares, "our oppressors will never willingly give back our freedom. We must use nonviolent means to fight for our freedom. The Nigerian Government that has occupied Biafra for 33 years will never give Biafrans back their freedom. Biafrans must fight for their freedom" (Biafra Foundation, 2001).

The perception of the Nigerian government as an oppressive, abusive occupying force and enslaver is clear. Despite the threat of arrest and charges of treason — which are punishable by death according to Nigerian law — the members of MASSOB continue to demand an independent, sovereign state of Biafra and equity for the Igbo people (Agbu, 2004).

Bakassi Boys

The Bakassi Boys is primarily a vigilante group located in the Igbo regions of Southeastern Nigeria. Their name is taken from a conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula in the 1980s. The group was founded by a trader named Gilbert Okoye who lived in Aba — a main trading center. He started the group as a way to protect himself and other traders from armed robbers who also often killed their victims. Armed with guns and machetes, the Bakassi Boys were so effective in reducing crime in Aba that the Governor of Abia state officially retained them in 1999 to police the state capital, Umuahia. When they drove most of the

criminals out of Aba and Umuahia, officials in the nearby cities of Onitsha and Owerri also hired the group (Smith, 2004).

Today the Bakassi Boys operate under the auspices of the local governors in the Igbo states of Abia, Imo, and Anambra — publicly punishing criminals by chopping off their limbs and heads and setting them on fire. Political opponents of the governor in Anambra state accused him of using the Bakassi Boys to intimidate critics. In an effort to distance himself from the group, the governor had the group change its name to the Anambra State Vigilante Services (AVS). But the attempt was transparent enough as AVS continued to enjoy the full support of the governor including weapons and vehicles. President Obasanjo ordered the group to disband in July 2000 to appease human rights activists, but residents of Onitsha and Aba turned out in large numbers to voice their support for the group (Harnischfeger, 2003).

Duruji Metumara observes a resurgence of Igbo nationalism and concludes that at its root is the Igbo people's perception of both their own social inequity in Nigerian society and of gross injustice in the distribution of power and resources (Metumara, 2009). According to Metumara, these social problems exacerbate ethnic tensions and serve as a catalyst for political violence.

Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)

In 2009, the Nigerian government offered amnesty to the various militant groups that had been attacking the oil infrastructure. The amnesty program consisted of multimillion dollar contracts which were given to the leaders of the militant organizations to protect the interests of the MNOCs rather than attack them. Essentially, the top commanders were bribed and coopted. The foot soldiers were offered vocational training — which turned out to be a bit of a joke as (1) the vocational training program was underfunded, and of course, (2) there aren't any jobs to be had in the region anyway.

With the top-level commanders employed by the government, a huge reduction in violence in the Niger Delta followed. However, a new group emerged in 2016 calling itself the NDA and several other militant groups have also sprung up in the delta in its wake.

NDA has launched several attacks so far, and vows that it has just begun. The first attack claimed by the group occurred on 19 February 2016. NDA's strike team 6 blew up the Clough Creek Tebidaba Agip Pipeline Manifold in Bayelsa State. Then again on 4 May, NDA blew up Chevron's main valve platform. The next day, the group launched coordinated attacks against several targets. NDA's strike team 7 blew up one of Chevron's gas wells in Abiteye (Well D25), as well as pipelines that supply several flow stations (Abiteye, Alero, Dibi, Otunana and Makaraba). At the same time, NDA's strike team 4 attacked the Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) gas and crude pipelines. The gas pipeline provides energy to Lagos and Abuja. The pipeline directs crude oil to the Warri and Kaduna refineries. On 12 May, the group publicly congratulated its strike teams on reducing oil production by 50% without shedding innocent blood (NDA, 2016).

On 3 July, the NDA struck again — this time blowing up several oil facilities operated by Chevron and Nigerian Petroleum Development Corporation. NDA damaged two major oil wells (well heads 7 and 8) and two crude oil trunk lines (Okpare, 2016). The IYC condemned the attacks particularly in light of the Nigerian government's offer to engage in dialogue (Fulani, 2016; Vanguard, 2016).

To demonstrate just how new NGA is, its "website," which is actually a blog, has only a dozen or so posts dating back to 6 February 2016. Most of the posts are signed by Col. Madoch Agbinibo, the organization's spokesperson.[10]

On its blog, NDA claims to be committed to stopping oil production in the Niger Delta without hurting people in the process. The group openly criticizes the leaders of the older groups that accepted the amnesty bribe and now sit back and allow the people to suffer while they grow rich and fat off of oil money.

NDA compares Nigeria to ancient Egypt, Buhari to Ramesses, and the people of the Niger Delta to the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt. NDA compares itself with Moses who delivered the Israelites out of slavery and into a land flowing with milk and honey.

The group has listed a number of demands on its blog; however, the main ones appear to be age-old: (1) that the Niger Delta be cleaned up and (2) that control of the oil be given back to the people of the Niger Delta. One demand in particular offers a clue as to why the NDV emerged when it

did. The group demands that the Niger Delta Amnesty Program be well-funded and allowed to run effectively.

Although Buhari has extended the amnesty program to 2017, he has radically altered it by slashing payouts, eliminating the middlemen (militant leaders who previously distributed funds to recipients), and discontinuing funding for security contracts. It's likely that NDV emerged as a response to these changes (DiChristopher, 2016).

A number of other militant groups also emerged in the delta between June and August 2016: the Red Egbesu Water Lions (EWL), the Asawana Deadly Force of Niger Delta (ADFND), the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), the Adaka Boro Avengers (ABA), the Niger Delta Red Squad (NDRS), the Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusaders (NDRC), the Niger Delta Justice Defence Group (NDJDG), and the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM). These groups all appear to want the same thing: socioeconomic justice and environmental protection in the Niger Delta (Addeh, 2016).

On 8 July, NDRC attacked the Brass Creek Manifold in Bayelsa State. NDGJM emerged on 9 August and reportedly blew up three state-owned pipelines — one on 10 August and two more on 19 August. On 30 August, NDGJM struck again when it blew up the Ogor-Oteri oil pipeline.

On 21 August, NDA announced a 60-day ceasefire and agreed to hold talks with the government on the condition that state security forces stop harassing and arresting members of the Ijaw community. However, less than a week later the Nigerian army launched "Operation Crocodile Smile" on 27 August, killing and arresting dozens of suspected militants.

Fourteen oil workers were kidnapped by unknown assailants on 2 September and rescued by security forces after a gun battle on 18 September. NDJDG blew up an oil pipeline in Gokana on 27 September. A violent clash ensued between NDV militants and state security officers in Imo state on 28 September, and NDV struck the nation's second largest pipeline system again on 2 November — just 2 days after it had reopened following repairs necessitated by the July bombing. As of the time of writing, no resolution has been agreed upon. It's likely the violence will continue.

Militant Groups in Southwestern Nigeria

Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (*OPC*)

The main militant group in Southwestern Nigeria is the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC) — a militia advocating for the rights and protection of the Yoruba people who comprise the bulk of the population in that region of the country.

OPC is a Yoruba militia established in 1995 by Fredrick Fasehun and Beko Ransome-Kuti. Fasehun was the presidential candidate for the now defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) who won the 1993 presidential election but was barred from office. Beko was a human rights activist who later became the national treasurer. Both were physicians, and they envisioned OPC primarily as an intellectual think tank. The platform of the OPC was Yoruba unity and an independent Oduduwa Republic. Fasehun and Beko designed a fairly elaborate organization complete with a National Executive Council, an Elders Council, and an army of foot soldiers called the Esos (Guichaoua, 2010).

On 19 May 1992, Beko — then president of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and leader of the Campaign for Democracy — was apprehended at his home in Lagos by 200 State Security officers. Human Rights Watch reported that Beko and four others were being held incommunicado by the Nigerian military government.

The cause that Beko stood for was so popular among the people that the government held his trial in a small village 500 miles from Lagos for fear of rioting (HRW, 1992). Beko was charged with conspiracy to commit treason and released on bail on 29 June.

Beko was again arrested on 27 July 1995. This time, the Nigerian government offered no reason for his arrest. Amnesty International (AI) stated in a 1995 report that Beko was tried by a secret military tribunal and was being held as a prisoner of conscience — perhaps for life. AI publicized the injustice and agitated for Beko's immediate and unconditional release (AI, 1995).

It was later alleged in Beko's obituary that he'd been arrested for attempting to help General Olusegun Obasanjo — who'd been accused of plotting a coup by President Abacha. Beko and Obasanjo were both released following the death of Abacha in June 1998. Beko died on 10 February 2006 of lung cancer (Smith, 2006).

Fasehun was also arrested and imprisoned from December 1996 to June 1998. In 1999, a leader of the Esos named Ganiyu Adams formed a splinter faction of the OPC. Unlike the Fasehun and Beko faction which consisted primarily of intellectuals, the Adams faction consists largely of uneducated foot soldiers. OPC became dramatically more violent against the Nigerian authorities and against members of other ethnic groups. In just 1 year (1999–2000), the Nigerian police recorded over 200 acts of violence committed by the OPC including the battle with the EBA in Ajegunle, a violent clash with port workers in Lagos, and the murder of a Lagos police officer (Anegbode and Igbafen, 2007).

A blog posted by Emmanuel Udoh — a Nigerian living in the Yoruba city of Ibadan — blames the violence on "political marginalization, poverty and unemployment, collapse of social infrastructure and state welfare programmes as well as the perceived inefficient and corrupt state system." (Udoh, 2013).

Insurgent Groups

The militant groups discussed thus far have engaged in acts of terrorism in order to coerce political and economic concessions. However, not all militant groups in Nigeria fit into this category. Northern Nigeria is a land of tremendous ethnopolitical conflict, and many Muslims in the North believe that *sharia* offers the answer. This section looks at three insurgent groups that emerged in this troubled region of the country: Maitatsine, the Muslim Brothers, and the Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC). These groups primarily seek (or sought) to overthrow the federal or state government and to replace the secular constitution with *sharia*.

Maitatsine

Maitatsine was an Islamic militia that challenged the dominant religious leaders and political authorities as well as the broader Muslim *ummah* in Nigeria. The group was founded by Muhammad Marwa, more commonly known as "Maitatsine" (the one who damns). Maitatsine became famous in Kano for his staunch anti-Western/antimodernity message in which he

denounced everything from bicycles to watches to radios to cars. The group rose to prominence in 1980 when it engaged in an armed confrontation with the authorities in Kano. The wave of violence spread to other cities of Northern Nigeria as well. 4,177 people were killed in the fighting that year, including Maitatsine himself (Alhaji-Shehu, 2012).

The group believed that modern, mainstream Muslim teaching strays from the original tenets of the *Quran* and that corrupt religious and political leaders in league with Western powers grow rich at the expense of the poor. Maitatsine proclaimed war on false Muslim leaders, puppet regimes, and those agents of the state that defended them. It was believed that Maitatsine was wiped out in 1980, but elements of the group re-emerged in 2005 in Jigawa and Kano states of Northern Nigeria (Best and Von Kemedi, 2005).

The Muslim Brothers

The Muslim Brothers, a revolutionary *Islamist* organization in Northern Nigeria, was created by Ibrahim Zakzaky. Originally the Muslim Brothers was a *Sunni* organization, and as such, it was strongly influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the idea of reviving an Islamic state governed by *sharia*.

As a university student in 1979, Zakzaky was heavily influenced by the Iranian Revolution. In his capacity as the leader of the Muslim Student Society of Nigeria (MSSN), he organized Muslim students to agitate for a national constitution based on *sharia* and the eventual overthrow of the secular government. These activities got Zakzaky expelled from school (Joseph and Rothfuss, 2012).

The group later split — with Zakzaky heading the *Shi'ite* faction which renamed itself the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). Zakzaky adopted Khomeini's anti-American rhetoric and created a paramilitary wing modelled after Iran's Revolutionary Guards (Pantucci and Jesperson, 2015). IMN received funding and military training from Iran.

Leadership of the *Sunni* faction was taken over by Abubakar Mujahid, Aminu Aliyu Gusau, and Ahmed Shuaibu — three of Zakzaky's former subordinates. The Muslim Brothers reject the idea that they belong to a Muslim sect. Rather, they claim that there are only two sects in the world:

believers and non-believers. Hence, they seek to establish a Muslim nation comprised wholly of believers (Deegan, 2011).

IMN has remained active for more than three decades. The group clashed with police during their annual march through Zaria in Kaduna State in September 2009 (Mamah, 2009). The group made headlines again in July 2014 when it exchanged gunfire with Nigerian troops in Zaria after Juma prayers. There's confusion over the reason for the altercation; however, it's claimed that three of Zakzaky's sons were shot in the incident (Tukur, 2014).

On 12 December 2015 — in what has become known as the Zaria Massacre — the Nigerian army waged an assault against the IMN. The operation was allegedly carried out in response to a failed assassination attempt against Tukur Buratai — Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff. Zakzaky was injured and hundreds of *Shia* were killed in the attack (Faul and Isenyo, 2015). Zakzaky, his wife, and hundreds of members were detained and remain in custody. The group remains active to this day and continues to protest for Zakzaky's release.

Arewa Peoples' Congress (*APC*)

The Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC) was formed on 13 December 1999 by Sagir Mohammed — a former member of the Directorate of Military Intelligence in the Nigerian Army. APC emerged as the result of a meeting held a week earlier between traditional Hausa–Fulani rulers, labor unions, student leaders, traders, farmers, politicians and a host of retired judges, lawyers, senior military officers, and police. The participants of the meeting decided that steps had to be taken to protect the interests of the Northern states and the unity of Nigeria as a nation. This later goal puts the APC in direct opposition to groups seeking autonomy, such as MASSOB and OPC (Ihonvbere and Mbaku, 2003; Ikelegbe, 2005).

APC represents the Hausa–Fulani majority which claims that Islam and the Sokoto heritage bind the various ethnic groups of Northern Nigeria (and theoretically all of Nigeria) together. APC's main Muslim contenders are the Borno who claim their lineage through the Kanem-Borno empire — a former rival of the Sokoto Caliphate. The non-Muslim groups, of course,

also resist Hausa–Fulani domination and all efforts at Islamization (Lehtinen and Ogumbor, 2000).

A Race to the Bottom?

Nigeria is a wonderfully complex case study. It's a wealthy African state with abundant natural resources and comparatively high literacy rates. Nigeria is a bit of an anomaly, however. On the one hand, it's not at all counterintuitive that it has experienced terrorism. Nigeria is being raped and pillaged by greedy MNOCs for its tremendous oil wealth, and what little profit the state retains is siphoned off by corrupt politicians.

Nigeria's sectarian groups do not trust one another; therefore, the majority of Nigerians live in abject poverty under a sectarian "dog eat dog" social order. Competition for scarce resources tends to unite those with shared sociocultural identities while polarizing such groups from those of different identities (Lash *et al*., 1992). Thus the underlying problem isn't one of ethnic or religious conflict per se but rather that Nigeria's highly fragmented society has not yet learned to share its resource wealth in an equitable manner. Most would expect violence to erupt in the face of such conditions. And few envision that peace is attainable at an acceptable cost.

Ahmadu Bello blamed the violence in Nigeria on the unwillingness of political elites to compromise their own self-interest for the national interest (Bello, 1966, p. 135). As early as the 1950s, Bello — who was then the leader of the Northern People's Congress — referred to the unification of Nigeria as the "mistake of 1914." Tekena Tamuno likewise attributed the violence in Nigeria to elite groups that focus on their own self-interest rather than the interests of the nation as a whole (Tamuno, 1991).

This chapter has looked into the history of colonial and post-independence Nigeria and concluded that the combination of dire economic conditions and a lack of confidence in a peaceful solution at an acceptable price has spawned two types of militants in Nigeria. The first fights for economic and political equality, and the second fights for an outward conformity to Islam that it believes will ultimately solve the many problems facing Nigerian society.

The first type of militant seeks economic and political parity. Traditionally, each region controlled its own natural resources. This

regional economic arrangement was replaced with the economic and political centralization imposed after the 1966 military coup. The result of this centralization has been endemic corruption, exploitation, and violence.

The discovery of oil brought neocolonial MNOCs that marginalized all but the elite in power. Peaceful protests in Nigeria have consistently failed and have been quashed with violence. Acts of terrorism and asymmetric war are among the few alternatives to the status quo available to the poor and marginalized minorities in Nigeria (Ukiwo, 2007).

The first type of violence can be understood in the simple terms of the need for survival, and it will continue until an equitable arrangement is made or there is simply nothing left to fight over. Violence in this first category is focused primarily on disorienting not so much the general population but the MNOC's operating within Nigeria's borders. While many of these groups would likely have preferred non-violent approaches, the harsh reaction on the part of the repressive Nigerian government quickly removed any illusions of a non-violent solution.

Nigeria's antiterrorism bill — passed by the National Assembly on 17 February 2011 — largely ignores the issue at the heart of the problem: Nigerians are suffering, and nobody seems to care. Predatory MNOCs and corrupt government officials have created an extremely negative perception among Nigerians. The 2009 Niger Delta Amnesty Program was effective in minimizing violence stemming from these groups until President Buhari reduced the funding for the program. There has since been a resurgence of violence in the region.

Perception of the other sheds tremendous light on the first category of violence in Nigeria. At its heart, economic inequality is a perceptual problem. In Nigeria, much of the violence is sparked by the people's perception of blatant inequality in the distribution of the nation's wealth, social and political marginalization, and government compliance with imperialistic MNOCs (Ousman, 2004; Danjibo, 2009; Ibaba, 2009; Isa, 2010; Salawu, 2010). The "have nots" perceive that they're being excluded from their fair share of the economic pie, and so they agitate for better equality in whatever manner they believe will effectuate change.

The second category of violence in Nigeria is comprised mostly of guerrilla insurgent groups that have attempted to either overthrow the government or establish *sharia* at the local or federal level. Believing that a return to Islam and the imposition of s*haria* will solve the country's many

social and economic problems, they seek to impose a stricter outward conformity to Islam. Since roughly 90% of Nigerian Muslims are *Sufi* Muslims (emphasizing individual spirituality and growth), *Salafist* groups attempt to enforce their beliefs through violence.

In October 1999, *sharia* was made state law in Zamfara state. A dozen or so other Northern states have since enacted their own *sharia* laws banning dancing, alcohol, and adultery. Some 750 Igbo Christians were killed in Kaduna while demonstrating against the imposition of *sharia* by the state. Igbos then retaliated against Northern Muslims by burning a mosque in Aba (Momoh and Adejumobi, 1999).

The desire to return to *sharia* is not a new phenomenon in Northern Nigeria — nor is the opposition against it. Much of the Christian resistance to the imposition of s*haria* in these Northern states is due to their perception of *sharia* as arbitrary, oppressive, and discriminatory (Laitin, 1982). On the other hand, many ordinary Muslims in the North perceive *sharia* as a barrier against further encroachments from the West. They see *sharia* as necessary for the preservation of their social fabric. And while most scholars accept this popular sentiment among Nigeria's Northern Muslims as genuine, many are skeptical of the religious leaders' motives.

With roughly 50 million Muslims, Northern Nigeria has one of the largest Muslim populations in Africa. The imposition of *sharia* in the North opened channels of political opportunity and tremendous power to Muslim religious leaders by allowing them to dominate institutions that enforce *sharia*. It's been suggested that the violent crackdown on peaceful protests against the imposition of *sharia* in the North was largely instigated by Muslim religious elites wishing to both flex and protect their newly acquired power (Bienen, 1986; Ajayi, 2012; Ukiwo, 2003; Harnischfeger, 2004; Suberu, 2009).

Perception of the other is critical to an understanding of Nigeria's second category of violence as well. The groups in this class believe that Nigeria's many problems are caused by what they perceive to be apostasy on behalf of the government, Muslim leaders, and average Muslim believers. In their mind, religious reform is necessary if Nigeria will ever attain the greatness and unity it once enjoyed under the various *caliphates*. Therefore, they agitate for the imposition of s*haria* and use violence as a means to achieve their goals. This has caused other groups to strike back as the country's non-Muslims resist (Sanni, 2011).

Neither type of militant appears to be interested in attacking the far enemy, such as the United States or Western Europe. Violence in Nigeria is serious, and some is highly ideological. However, so far at least, it does not appear to target the West.[11]

In Chapter 7, we'll explore how Boko Haram fits into this typology.

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[1]The Oil Rivers Protectorate was renamed the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893.

[2]King Jaja of Opobo in 1887, Nana of Itsekiri in 1892, Overnarame in 1897, King Ibanichuka of Okrika in 1896 (Tamuno, 1972).

[3]The West African Students' Union (WASU) in 1925, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) in 1931, the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944, the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) also in 1944 and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in 1949.

[4]These laws were the Oil in Navigable Waters Act of 1968, the Petroleum Act of 1969, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Decree of 1978, and the Land Use Act of 1978. See Nayar (1975).

[5]Gowon was overthrown by General Murtala Mohammed on 30 July 1975. On 13 February 1979, Mohammed was assassinated in an unsuccessful coup, leaving Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo in charge. Obasanjo incorporated economic and political reforms in the face of plummeting oil prices and rising national debt, eventually handing power over to civilian President Shugari. See Olulòeyòe (1985).

[6]The British monarch is required to be a Protestant.

[7]These groups include the Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Muslim Student's Society (MSS), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), and Human Rights Africa (HRA). See Oyeniyi (2010).

[8]Among them are the Maitatsine Uprisings, the Kano Metropolitan Riot, the Ilorin Riot, the University of Ibadan Crisis, the crisis that occurred over Nigeria's membership in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (America) in January/February 1986, the Zangon-Kataf, Kafanchan, Kaduna, Zaria and Funtua Riots, the Kaduna Polytechnic Riot, the Bayero University Crisis, the Bauchi and Katsina Riots, the Kano Riot, the Zangon-Kataf Riot, the Kano Civil Disturbance, the Jos Crises, and the Shagamu Conflict (Ibrahim, 1997).

[9]There are far too many ethnic groups to discuss in depth. Other such groups not discussed here include the Chikoko Movement, the National Youth Council of the Ogoni People (NYCOP), the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSEIND), the Movement for the Survival of the Itsekiri Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN), the Urhobo Youth Movement (UYM), the Movement for the Reparation of Ogbia, the Igbo Peoples' Congress (IPC), the Movement of the Oroh People, the Elimotu Movement, the Arogbo Freedom Fighters, the November 1895 Movement, the Igbo Youth Congress (IYC), the Niger Delta Resistant Movement (NDRM), the Nigerian or Yobe Taliban, and Meinbutu.

[10]As of 3 July 2016, NDA's website has not been available online. The group continues to communicate via their Twitter account: @NDAvengers.

[11]Nigerian citizen Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (who failed to ignite a bomb on board an airliner on 25 December 2009, en route from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan) was trained by al-Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). He used the same tactic as Abdullah Hassan Talea Asiri used on 27 August 2009. Both were AQAP-trained and both hid pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) in their underwear. Asiri attempted to assassinate Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, the Assistant Interior Minister of Saudi Arabia. A third attack was discovered and thwarted in late 2010 involving printer cartridges loaded with PETN and shipped on cargo planes. The intent was to ignite them over U.S. soil. All three were linked to AQAP, and none of them were associated with Nigerian organizations — despite the fact that Abdulmutallab was a Nigerian citizen.

Chapter 7

Boko Haram

I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill…
— Abubaker Shekau

Introduction

In this chapter, we consider how Boko Haram devised its strategic objectives and the extent that external factors played in influencing that decision. In what ways are its goals different from those of its immediate predecessors and why? Have these goals been consistent? If not, how have they changed and evolved since the group's inception?

We begin with a brief history of the organization. Next, the chapter details the various stages that Boko Haram has moved through and identifies which stage the group is in now. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief analysis as to whether Boko Haram employs strategic terrorism or whether it should be labeled a guerrilla insurgency.

History of Boko Haram

As with al-Shabaab, there are multiple versions of Boko Haram's beginnings. One version that seems to have the most credibility and factual basis is that Abubakar Lawan originally founded the *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'al hijra* or Muslim Youth Organization (MYO) in Maiduguri in

1995. The organization operated a school and a mosque and was largely a magnet for the poor.

Given the economic and social conditions in Northern Nigeria at the time, many parents felt it better to send their children to religious schools rather than to public schools. It was within this social and economic atmosphere that the group began. Under Lawan, MYO continued for 7 years as a non-violent organization focused on Islamic education until 2002 when Mustapha Modu Jon (aka Mohammed Yusuf) assumed leadership of the group and radicalized it (Ajayi, 2012; Pantucci and Jesperson, 2015).

Two prominent *Salafist* organizations operating in Northern Nigeria at the time were *Jama'atul Tajdid Islam* or Movement for the Revival of Islam (JTI) and *Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'awaI kamatu Sunna* or Movement for the Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of Sunni Islam (Izala). Both organizations were committed to promoting *Salafist* doctrine (Zenn, 2014).

Born on 29 January 1970 in Gingir village (Yobe State), Yusuf is reported to have had four wives and 12 children (Oluwajemberun, 2012). He belonged to JTI, a *Sunni* organization comprised primarily of radical IMN affiliates. JTI was funded by Saudi petro dollars to resist the growing *Shi'ite* ideology of the Iranian Revolution. The organization opposed the secular Nigerian government and denounced the Muslim leaders who cooperated with it.

Yusuf completed *Quranic* studies in Niger and Chad where he specialized in the writings of ibn Taymiyyah who advocated *jihad* against Muslim rulers that did not govern according to *sharia*. Following his studies, Yusuf moved to Borno State where he took advantage of the large Izala membership from which he recruited members to his own group. Rising to prominence within JTI, Yusuf eventually became the Borno State *emir* in 1994. Five years later, JTI was absorbed into the Izala movement, and Yusuf's influence grew immensely (Pantucci and Jesperson, 2015).

Over the years, Yusuf began to openly challenge the IMN leader, Jafa'ar Adam, regarding *Salafist* doctrine and especially over the matter of secular education. While Adam argued that Western education was important for the economic development of the Northern half of the country, Yusuf insisted that Muslims should reject all aspects of Western education (including Muslim schools that taught secular subjects). Yusuf argued that secular education contradicts both the *Quran* and the *Ahadith,* corrupts

Muslim society, and prevents the establishment of an Islamic political order based upon *sharia* (Zenn, 2014).

Yusuf assumed control of MYO in 2002 when Lawan left to pursue studies in Saudi Arabia. Even though the group's primary focus was on *da'wa* (proselytizing and conversion), Yusuf's convictions regarding the evils of Western education and the virtue of waging *jihad* proved extremely popular among his followers. The group officially changed its name to *Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad) more popularly known as Boko Haram or literally, "book is forbidden." The name is understood more figuratively to mean "Western education is forbidden." (Mohammed, 2014; Akinola, 2015).

More accurately, the group rejects Western individualism and critical thought and advocates total conformity to a strict interpretation of Islam (Ajayi, 2013; Oyewole, 2013). Like Maitatsine before it, Boko Haram also believes that Nigeria's Muslim leadership is corrupt and calls for the overthrow of the secular Federal Republic of Nigeria (Thomson, 2012).

Boko Haram attracted mainly poor Muslims from the slums of Maiduguri, but Muslims from nearby cities and even adjacent countries also showed interest. Yusuf used Boko Haram as a platform to promote his views. His popularity and influence was on the rise. It wasn't long before he was approached by Ali Modu Sheriff — the 2003 Borno State gubernatorial candidate. In exchange for Yusuf's political support, Sheriff promised to implement *sharia* and award senior government posts to Yusuf and his followers.

Yusuf and his very large constituency backed Sheriff — who won the election and appointed Yusuf as the Borno representative of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria. Sheriff, however, failed to keep his promise to enact *sharia*.

Yusuf was not willing to settle, and he became increasingly vocal regarding his demands. His message continued to attract followers, as did his open criticism of Sheriff and the corrupt Nigerian political machine. Yusuf's growing popularity was due in part to public awareness of the corrupt Nigerian government (Mantzikos, 2010).

The economic oil boom taking place in the predominantly Christian South while Muslims in the North languished in abject poverty also contributed. Yusuf's message against Western education was extremely

popular among Northern Muslims as they strongly resented Western support of the South and blamed the corruption of the Islamic leadership in the North on encroaching Western values (Pham, 2012).

As Boko Haram expanded into surrounding states (Bauchi, Yobe, and Kano), Yusuf's practice of pronouncing *takfir* against apostate rulers became extremely dangerous given his popularity and the blatant corruption of the Nigerian government. He was harassed and arrested repeatedly by State Security Services (SSS), and the group began to fight back.

In December 2003, Boko Haram attacked police stations in multiple cities across Yobe state in Northeastern Nigeria. The group stole arms and ammunition, burned multiple police stations to the ground, and killed several police officers. A combined effort between the police and the armed forces finally quashed the attacks and arrested 200 members of the group (Sanni, 2007a, b).

Boko Haram was relatively quiet between December 2003 and July 2009 when it re-emerged in Maiduguri and established its headquarters at the ibn Taymiyyah Masjid Mosque (where Yusuf also lived). The group expanded into all the major cities of Northern Nigeria. Sectarian fighting and conflicts with the local police eventually led to a raid on a Boko Haram hideout. Police confiscated weapons and explosives and arrested nine members (Mohammed, 2014).

The raid triggered rioting in four states across Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram members engaged in a week-long battle with Nigerian security forces in Maiduguri between July 25 and 31, leaving more than 700 residents dead and another 5,000 internally displaced. The conflict between Boko Haram and SSS had become an armed insurrection. Nigerian troops intervened, killing hundreds of members and demolishing the group's main mosque (Durotoye, 2015). Yusuf was arrested along with hundreds of his followers. Following his arrest, Yusuf, his father-in-law and several other key members were executed without a trial. State security forces hunted down and killed roughly 1,000 more so-called members in the following week (Cook, 2011).

Local police were basically on a killing spree, targeting anyone seen going in or out of certain mosques in designated areas of Borno State. On one occasion, nine suspected Boko Haram members apprehended in Maiduguri were placed in the custody of local police. A few hours later,

they were found dead in a hospital parking lot (Pantucci and Jesperson, 2015).

Abubakar Shekau

The remaining members of Boko Haram dispersed to other locations to regroup. Long-term deputy, Abubakar Shekau, emerged as the new leader. In a video released on 9 August 2009, Shekau professed to be loyal to Osama bin Laden. He also stated that Boko Haram would wage *jihad* until *sharia* was established throughout Nigeria and the evil influences of Western civilization were eradicated from the land (Ibid.).

Exactly why Shekau pledged *bay'ah* to bin Laden is unclear. Perhaps he was hoping for support, or perhaps he thought it would grant legitimacy to the organization. What is clear is that, by Shekau's own words, Boko Haram's strategy was the exact opposite of al-Qaeda's. Shekau had every intention of fighting the near enemy and toppling the Nigerian government, while bin Laden elected to fight the far enemy and coerce Western military forces to evacuate the Middle East.

During Ramadan the following year, Boko Haram attacked a prison, freed 100 members, and killed seven guards. The Nigerian government responded by dispatching the Joint Task Force (JTF) comprised of troops from the state's various armed forces. The JTF has been somewhat successful in arresting and/or killing members of the group. The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) has also been deployed in an effort to thwart Boko Haram (Eke, 2015).

On 16 June 2011, a suicide bomber from the group exploded a vehicle-born improvised explosive device (VBIED) next to the national police headquarters in Abuja — blowing up a fleet of parked cars. This attack was significant as the operation required substantially more sophistication than Boko Haram's customary stick of dynamite lobbed from a moving vehicle (Pantucci and Jesperson, 2015).

Boko Haram again gained international attention in August 2011 when it exploded a bomb at the United Nations compound in Abuja, taking the lives of 23 people and injuring 116 more. All except one of the casualties were Nigerian. Some speculate from the sophistication of the attack that the group must have had outside support.

For example, the United States National Strategy for Counterterrorism states specifically that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), sometimes referred to as al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM), has provided training to Boko Haram (White House, 2011). However, there's nothing to suggest that Boko Haram harbors any plans to extend beyond its current domain. Still, members of the African Union have voiced concern that the group may threaten regional stability (Burns, 2012).

On 4 November, Boko Haram slaughtered some 150 people in a spate of coordinated attacks across Northern Nigeria. The group regularly targets Muslims guilty of various infractions of s*haria* such as drinking and gambling. Boko Haram struck again on 25th December 2011 — this time targeting a Catholic church in Madalla (Hinshaw, 2012).

The organization's Shura Council is headed by Shekau and consists of approximately 30 senior members who are geographically dispersed throughout the areas in which the group operates. Local commanders carry out the Shura Council's decisions. All senior members avoid personal interaction with one another and communicate only as needed. Like Godane, Shekau has been known to rule with dictatorial tendencies — often disregarding the Shura Council altogether (Weeraratne, 2015).

The United States proclaimed Shekau a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in 2012 and placed a $7 million bounty on his head. Since then, efforts to capture or kill him have required Shekau to go into hiding. He rarely appears in public and interacts with only a small number of trusted commanders (Eke, 2015).

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for multiple bomb blasts in Kano City, killing 185 people on 21 January 2012. Two weeks later, on 8 February, it sent a suicide bomber into a Nigerian military base in Kaduna. The operative almost reached the headquarters before security shot him. He detonated himself outside the barracks of the 1st Mechanized Division. Only the bomber was killed (Tonwe and Eke, 2013).

Ansaru

Similar to al-Shabaab, Boko Haram has seen a number of splits and fractures as key individuals jockey for prominence and power. One of the major offshoots to emerge from these splits is *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina*

fi Biladis Sudan, "Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa," more commonly known as Ansaru.

The group split from Boko Haram in January 2012 after the Kano attacks, claiming that the slaughter of innocent Muslims was un-Islamic. Ansaru instead targets both Western and Nigerian interests supportive of any military operations against militant Islamic groups in the region. Furthermore, while Boko Haram utilizes mass casualty attacks to attract publicity, Ansaru employs more sophisticated tactics requiring highly trained operatives. In the official announcement of its creation on 26 January, the group referred to itself as the "humane" alternative to Boko Haram. It further stated that it would only launch attacks in self-defense (Zenn, 2014).

In November 2012, 40 Ansaru operatives launched a coordinated attack against the headquarters of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Abuja to free detained militants. While the group killed security forces as needed to carry out the operation, there were no civilian casualties. Ansaru launched a similar attack in January 2013 when it ambushed a convoy of Nigerian peacekeepers. In February 2013, the group kidnapped seven international construction workers in the Local Government Area of Bauchi State. Ansaru operatives executed the hostages after the Nigerian military attempted to free them (TRAC, 2014).

In addition to this basic difference, Ansaru also disagrees with Boko Haram's strategic goals and leadership under Abubakar Shekau (Bamidele, 2014). While Boko Haram is strictly intent upon overthrowing the corrupt Nigerian regime and imposing Islamic reform upon Nigerian society, Ansaru advocates for the establishment of an Islamic state that extends from Niger to Cameroon similar to the *Sokoto Caliphate* founded by Usman dan Fodio in the 19th century (Zenn, 2014).

Chibok Schoolgirls

Boko Haram is adamantly opposed to females receiving a modern education and views Western-educated, non-Muslim women as infidels and outcasts. In 2012, the group distributed pamphlets threatening to kidnap infidel women and make them slaves. It has been attacking Western schools in Northeastern Nigeria ever since (Blanchard, 2014).

Boko Haram militants set a teacher and 29 female students on fire at a boarding school in Yobe state in July 2013. Attacks became so common that by March 2014 approximately 85 schools were closed in Borno State and some 120,000 students were sent home for their own safety. In a video released in July 2013, Shekau threatened to continue to burn infidel schools and kill their teachers.

Group members also stated that earlier attacks against schools in Maiduguri in 2012 were retaliation for the Nigerian government's arrest of teachers from Islamic schools. Violent incidents at schools have not only affected educators and students in Nigeria, but they've also created havoc in neighboring countries such as Cameroon which has closed schools located near the border for fear of attack (Weeraratne, 2015).

Boko Haram engaged in roadside attacks in Northeastern Nigeria in September 2013, stopping traffic on a busy highway between the cities of Maiduguri and Damaturu and killing 159 passengers (Cocks, 2013). The U.S. designated Boko Haram and its splinter group, Ansaru, as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) on 13 November 2013 (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

Without digressing into a blow-by-blow recounting of the group's numerous and gruesome attacks, one estimate claims that the group is responsible for the deaths of over 3,000 victims in more than 700 separate attacks between September 2010 and December 2013 (Zenn, 2014).[1] That equates to roughly 18 attacks per month. When reading the accounts of the incidents, one becomes overwhelmed with the sheer volume of violence — much of which has received very little, if any, international media attention.

Boko Haram did make international news in April 2014 when the group kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in the town of Chibok in Northeastern Nigeria and announced its intention to sell them as slaves (Maiangwa and Agbiboa, 2014). Nearly 60 girls escaped from the group's hideout in the Sambisa Forest, and another 21 girls were released in November 2016. The rest remain unaccounted for.

The Nigerian army has launched Operation Lafiya Dole (peace by any means) in an effort to locate the remaining girls and return them to their families.

A Change in Tactics

By late spring 2014, Boko Haram began to deviate from its traditional hit-and-run tactics and entered into a short-lived campaign to occupy towns and villages. In May 2014, Boko Haram attacked Sabon Gari, a Christian Igbo town in Kano State. In the same month, the group assassinated the *Emir* of Gwoza.

On 4 July, more than 200 Boko Haram militants seized Damboa, killed civilians, demolished government buildings, and battled security forces. Damboa was the first town to fall to the group. The same month, the group kidnapped the wife of the vice prime minister of Cameroon and attempted to assassinate Muhammadu Buhari.

In August, Boko Haram took control of Gwoza in Borno State where the group announced the seat of its *caliphate*. While it's difficult to know with any accuracy, some estimate that by September 2014 Boko Haram controlled 25 towns and villages (home to roughly three million people) in Northeastern Nigeria and the bordering regions of Cameroon (Weeraratne, 2015).

Boko Haram is reported to have killed 6,644 people in 2014 alone, and the group shows no signs of slowing. In fact, as the group began to lose ground to multinational forces, it reverted back to its former hit-and-run tactics with a vengeance (Blanchard, 2015).

In January 2015, Boko Haram launched the Baga massacre that reportedly killed nearly 2,000 people. Estimates of the slain, as horrific as they are, do not account for the number of those who have been displaced, widowed, or orphaned in this attack (Eke, 2015).

Shekau Pledges Allegiance to Baghdadi

On 7 March 2015, the group pledged *bay'ah* to IS, and Baghdadi accepted it a week later. On 7 June, Boko Haram crossed a new threshold by sending three female suicide bombers to launch coordinated attacks that killed more than 50 people in Maiduguri (Aljazeera, 2015).

The Obama administration authorized $45 million in defense aid to Nigeria in September 2015. The following month, Washington announced that it would deploy surveillance drones and up to 300 troops to Cameroon to help fight Boko Haram (Onyulo, 2015).

President Muhammadu Buhari has promised to do everything in his power to end the violence in Northern Nigeria that to date has displaced more than 1.5 million people (Levs, 2015). Still, Boko Haram militants continue to battle the Nigerian military as well as forces from neighboring states.

Islamic State Announces a New Leader of its West African Affiliate

Shekau has become infamous for his use of children as suicide bombers. Estimates suggest that the group deployed four child suicide bombers in 2014 and as many as 44 the following year. There's no accurate data available for 2016 as of yet; however, in the early part of the year, Boko Haram suffered another split as a number of members left the group. They cited the use of child suicide bombers and Shekau's erratic and dictatorial leadership style as reasons. Apparently even IS was disturbed by the use of child suicide bombers and reportedly ordered Shekau to stop (an order which he ignored).

On 3 August 2016 — in the 41st issue of its magazine, *al-Naba* — IS announced that Abu Musab al-Barnawi had been appointed as the new leader of their West African affiliate. Shekau posted an audio message on YouTube the same day, denying that the group had a new leader and stating that he was "still around."

Barnawi is the second eldest son of Mohammed Yusuf, the former leader of Boko Haram. He had been a spokesman for the group and stated that his mother and eldest brother were killed in the 2012 Kano Attack. It's too early to speculate just how serious a challenge Barnawi poses to Shekau.

Boko Haram's Theoretical Underpinnings

While MYO began as an *Islamist* organization, the group has since passed from a *jihadist* group under the leadership of Yusuf to a *takfiri* group under the leadership of Shekau. Boko Haram traces its *takfiri* ideology as far back as ibn Taymiyyah. Like Maitatsine, the group believes that Nigeria's

Muslim leadership is corrupt and calls for the overthrow of the secular Federal Republic of Nigeria (Thomson, 2012; Kassim, 2015).

Boko Haram has successfully combined its varying degrees of *Salafist* doctrine over the years with Northern Nigeria's strong tradition of *tajdid* (Islamic revivalism), as seen throughout its history from Usman dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate to the Maitatsine Riots and even the 2002 Miss World Riots in Kaduna.

Boko Haram's Strategic Goals

Boko Haram's strategic goals have remained consistent throughout the group's various incarnations. The group has transitioned from a peaceful *Islamist* organization to a *jihadist* insurgency to a *takfiri* group that mercilessly targets civilians. Still, regardless of its ideology or tactical approach, Boko Haram has consistently sought the overthrow of the corrupt Nigerian government, the institution of *sharia*, and the Islamization of Nigerian society.

Even Shekau's alleged allegiance to IS, which now appears to be as disingenuous as Godane's allegiance to al-Qaeda, has made very little impact on the group's strategic goals. In fact, rather than setting its sights on a regional *caliphate* as Ansaru has done, Boko Haram remains committed to ruling the Nigerian state.

The group briefly occupied territory beginning in summer 2014; however, it failed to successfully implement a clear and hold strategy in order to expand or even maintain its self-proclaimed Nigerian *caliphate*. Boko Haram has since reverted to guerrilla-style tactics consisting of random urban attacks — suggesting that the group has suffered a reduction in military capability.

In fact, Shekau's conspicuous absence from a video released via social media on 2 June 2015 led to speculations that the group may have split or that Shekau may be dead or in hiding (Saul, 2015). It's likely that Shekau's declaration of allegiance to Baghdadi on 7 March 2015 was intended to boost the morale of Boko Haram militants in the face of defeat at the hands of the multinational coalition. It's also quite plausible that Shekau's pledge was nothing more than a publicity stunt to attract new recruits — both domestic and foreign — during a time of trouble for the group.

Does Boko Haram Employ Strategic Terrorism?

The purpose of this section is to explore whether Boko Haram's violence can be labeled as strategic terrorism or whether the group is more accurately described as a guerrilla insurgency.

Boko Haram can be divided into three phases. Phase one extended from the group's inception as MYO under Lawan in 1995 to 2002 when Yusuf took over as leader. During this phase, MYO was an *Islamist* organization and clearly did not employ strategic terrorism.

The second phase extended from 2002 when Yusuf assumed control to 30 July 2009 when Yusuf was killed. During this second phase, Yusuf continued the operation that Lawan started but with a decidedly *jihadist* bent. Although Boko Haram's first attacks involved a squabble with local residents in Kanamma over fishing spots and farmlands, the group primarily clashed with security forces and police. It did not specifically target civilians. Given the group's strategic goal of overthrowing the Nigerian government and instituting *sharia* rather than coercing political concessions, we can argue that Boko Haram didn't employ strategic terrorism in phase two either but rather operated as a guerrilla insurgency.

In phase three, however, we witness a dramatic change in both ideology and tactics. Beginning in August 2009, Boko Haram changed leaders, adopted the *takfiri* doctrine, and began to mercilessly target civilians. The group has also been pulled into conflict with the Multinational Joint Task Force. Still, Boko Haram's strategic objective continued to be the overthrow of the Nigerian government, not the manipulation of the state into granting political concessions.

Had Shekau even hinted at attempting to coerce the Nigerian government into making political concessions, one could argue that the group's tactical use of violence meets the first criterion of strategic terrorism. However, this is not the case. In fact, Shekau has absolutely refused to negotiate with the government, and members that have been willing to talk to government officials have been threatened or killed.

In September 2011, for example, former President Obasanjo met with Yusuf's family to discuss paying compensation for Yusuf's extrajudicial execution. A few days later, Boko Haram murdered Yusuf's brother-in-law who had been a key person in the negotiation.

Also in January 2013, a faction of the group declared a cease-fire and future negotiations with the government. A second faction demanded that the government meet a list of conditions prior to engaging in negotiations. Shekau responded by refusing to negotiate and threatening to kill anyone that attempted to make future contact with government officials (Weeraratne, 2015).

Therefore, even though Boko Haram has been relying primarily upon violence to achieve its strategic objectives, it does not meet the criteria for strategic terrorism.

Of course, we have to consider the possibility that Shekau has painted himself into a military corner, thus necessitating that he target the far enemy in order to coerce neighboring states to withdraw their forces from the multinational coalition.

While the group has engaged in a number of cross-border attacks, it does not appear at this time that Boko Haram's strategy of attacking the near enemy has changed. Even if Boko Haram does change its strategy, Shekau's refusal to accept concessions from the Nigerian government indicates that the group's strategic objective of overthrowing the regime has not changed.

Like Baghdadi and Godane, Shekau perceives anyone who does not support him as an enemy. To date, the group has killed far more Muslims than non-Muslims. It has made no attempt to exact political concessions from the government or to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Boko Haram is a brutal insurgency wholly dedicated to overthrowing the Nigerian government and instituting *sharia.*

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[1]See also Bamidele (2012) who further estimates that in 2011 alone, Boko Haram caused 550 deaths in 115 attacks. A report by Amnesty International (2012) corroborates that Boko Haram is responsible for the deaths of at least 500 people in 2011.

Chapter 8

The Future of Terrorism and the Role of Strategic Theory

Every reform movement has a lunatic fringe.

— Theodore Roosevelt

Introduction

After comparing and contrasting the ideological underpinnings of al-Qaeda and IS and by tracing the respective influences that each have borrowed from their predecessors, we've concluded that al-Qaeda is a *jihadist* organization that meets the criteria for strategic terrorism and IS is a *takfiri* group that does not.

This observation in no way minimizes the seriousness of either group's violence, but it does help us to better understand the nature of the threat we're facing. This information is important because it's necessary to understand the enemy and to know what we're up against.

Given that al-Shabaab has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and Boko Haram has essentially pledged allegiance to both al-Shabaab and IS, we've explored whether these alliances have had any impact upon the two groups' ideology and/or strategic objectives. We've concluded that they essentially do not. Other than recently embracing al-Qaeda's strategy of attacking the far enemy, al-Shabaab has precious few, if any, practical ties to al-Qaeda. And while Boko Haram has always shared IS's strategy of attacking the near enemy, these two groups have no practical ties to one another either.

Whether this relationship will change in light of recent events is pure speculation.

What does the future hold for organizations such as al-Qaeda, IS, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram? Without a crystal ball, no one can know for sure. However, we can be certain that whatever developments occur, analytical tools such as strategic theory and strategic terrorism will prove indispensable for understanding terrorist violence and the strategic goals of actors that engage in it.

Beyond the conceptual clarity that the strategic approach provides, there's also the practical policy application from which we can all benefit. For example, counterterrorism — one of the most popular responses to a variety of violence — often utilizes harsh retaliatory measures that can be manipulated by organizations to increase popular support for their cause. As Amitai Etzioni puts it, the essence of counterterrorism is "brute force" (Etzioni, 2015, p. 346).

Dogs and Postal Workers

As an illustration, we can draw an analogy from everyday life. Many dogs bark at, and perhaps even bite (or attempt to bite), postal workers when they deliver parcels. Dogs don't act this way because they hate postal workers or because they're ideologically opposed to parcels but because it's in most dogs' nature to protect their territory. Thus, it only makes sense to consider the territorial nature of dogs when addressing this particular problem.

Unfortunately, most antiterrorism measures and virtually all counter-terrorism measures are so focused on the tactical use of violence itself (rather than the strategic goal behind the violence) that the likely response would be to initiate drone strikes against the dog and all of its "supporters" (counterterrorism) and/or maximize security around the perimeter of the postal worker's home (antiterrorism).

But even in the most extreme example, if you killed every dog who threatened a postal worker and/or built a wall around that postal worker's home, there are still other dogs and other postal workers. Therefore, the problem would continue until you addressed the underlying issue, which in this analogy is the territorial nature of most dogs and the practice of using postal workers to deliver parcels to people's homes. While it's doubtful that

we'd be this shortsighted when addressing most everyday problems, this is exactly what we've done when dealing with the threat of violence.

Drawing upon our analogy of dogs and postal workers, Ethiopian military forces and the TFG can be likened to postal workers and al-Shabaab can be considered the dog. Some of you are, no doubt, objecting to this analogy. After all al-Shabaab is an al-Qaeda affiliate, and al-Qaeda did far more than threaten local postal workers — it attacked the central post office. While these points are both true, there are two counterarguments that can be made against this objection.

First, the practical ties between al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are questionable at best (Walker, 2008; Marchal, 2009; Vidino *et al*., 2010). Second, al-Qaeda's motivation behind attacking the far enemy was primarily an attempt to stop it from supporting the near enemy in the form of Western-backed puppet governments (Gerges, 2005).

In other words, the far enemy was never the main issue. The dog only attacked the main post office in an effort to prevent it from dispatching more postal workers. While Sayyid Qutb advocated a complete break with the British protectorate government in Egypt as a necessary first step in securing Egypt's future, two of his most noteworthy followers (Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden), who would later form al-Qaeda, became convinced that overthrowing the far enemy was more urgent. Bin Laden also convinced Zawahiri, the founder of Islamic Jihad and current leader of al-Qaeda, that attacking the far enemy would be instrumental in the overthrow of apostate governments in the Muslim world (Musallam, 2005; Zollner, 2007; Ingram, 2014).

This opinion is shared by others as well who articulate that it's the perception that the United States is the real power behind the corrupt regimes around the world that fuels much of the hatred for America (Doran, 2001; Goodwin, 2006).

A Pound of Flesh

If our first mistake in the "war on terror" is to exact a pound of flesh regardless of the long-term results, then another mistake is to focus on the suspected "causes" of terrorism rather than the strategic goals of those who engage in it — for this is simply the opposite side of the tactical coin. Our

tradition of isolating our focus on either systemic or lower-level causal variables (such as religion, poverty, illiteracy, political grievances, insanity, or a cost–benefit analysis) is virtually the same approach as reacting to tactical violence with more tactical violence. Both are tactics, and neither address the strategic goals of the perpetrators.

Rather than attempting to understand actors that engage in violence via the traditionally suspected causes of terrorism, a more productive approach would be to consider the strategic value of violence in relation to the groups' respective long-term goals.

In addition to being a less efficient approach, our continued reliance on either widespread systemic or lower-level explanations of terrorism has led to questionable "solutions" — often with disastrous results.

For instance, economic aid certainly has not improved popular opinion toward America in the Middle East, and the fact that Israel has consistently received substantially more aid than any other country in the Middle East has been a point of contention among Arab states (Stockman, 2011).

According to both systemic and lower-level approaches to countering terrorism, however, economic aid should have produced positive results toward the reduction of terrorism. Systemically, aid is intended to alleviate poverty and improve overall living standards. Yet despite the *net* increase in living standards (after factoring for corruption), popular opinion toward America is still low.

We certainly cannot blame America's low popularity rating on mental illness or moral deficiency alone, although the latter almost certainly did play at least a partial role. Furthermore, as unpopular as American foreign policy has been in the Middle East, it's certainly not among the more pressing grievances of the average individual faced with high unemployment, rising prices, and fading hope for the future.

From a purely cost–benefit analysis, we would expect states receiving U.S. aid to act in accordance with America's foreign policy goals — if for no other reason — so as not to jeopardize future aid. Yet this has certainly not been the case for most Arab states in the Middle East. Economic aid has neither reduced violence nor improved America's popularity in the region.

Organizations that engage in violence often rely on popular support to succeed. We can distinguish between active support and passive support. Both types of popular support equate to an overall reduction in the cost of engaging in violence, making future incidents even more feasible.

While tactical counterterrorism is necessary, it often exacerbates violence when it's not employed as part of an overall strategy. Unfortunately, this is most often the case. We need to be more strategic in our response to violence. Firefighters don't just automatically spray water on every single fire that breaks out. First they need to understand the nature of the fire. Water may put it out, or it may make it worse — spreading the fire to other structures and creating a far greater problem. The same is true with violence.

Simply responding to violence with more violence is often ineffective in preventing more violence. What's worse, it's often the response that perpetrators are hoping for as it plays directly into their hands — affording them a measure of legitimacy and helping them generate support.

Furthermore, the quality and sheer quantity of usable intelligence needed concerning the nature, location, and timing of future attacks — as well as the identity of the perpetrators — is simply not readily available *and shared* in most situations to render antiterrorism effective.

A more fruitful approach, both academically and from a policy perspective, would be to improve our understanding of the strategic goals that actors such as al-Qaeda, IS, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram hope to achieve. Knowledge of the strategic goals of actors who engage in violent attacks allows us to more successfully respond to tactical violence in ways that both protect our immediate interests and address the actors' long-term strategic goals. This increased understanding will afford academics and policymakers alike a more objective perspective and the ability to respond to all acts of violence more strategically.

List of Acronyms

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AI	Amnesty International
AU	African Union
AIAI	Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Union)
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ANC	African National Congress
APC	Arewa Peoples' Congress
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQEA	Al-Qaeda in East Africa
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AQLIM	Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb
ARPCT	Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism
ARS	Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia
ARS-A	Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (Asmara Wing)
ASWJ	Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a
CBW	Chemical and Biological Weapons
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
CTS	Critical Terrorism Studies
DHS	United States Department of Homeland Security
EBA	Egbesu Boys of Africa
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front

ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Force
EU	European Union
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
GWoT	Global War on Terror
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICU	Islamic Courts Union (Union of Islamic Courts)
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGC	Interim Governing Council
IMN	Islamic Movement in Nigeria
INC	Ijaw National Congress
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
IS	Islamic State
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTI	Jama'atul Tajdid Islam (Movement for the Revival of Islam)
JTJ	Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Jihād (Organization of Monotheism and Jihad)
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWoT	Long War on Terror
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNOC	Multinational Oil Company
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MSC	Mujahidin Shura Council
MSSN	Muslim Student Society of Nigeria
MYC	Muslim Youth Center
MYO	Muslim Youth Organization
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa

NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
NFDLA	Northern Frontier District Liberation Army
NSC	National Salvation Council
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPC	Oduduwa Peoples' Congress
PAGAD	People Against Gangsterism and Drugs
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNR	Passenger Name Record
RNC	Royal Niger Company
RPG	Rocket-Propelled Grenade
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SNA	Somali National Army
SNF	Somali National Front
SRRC	Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council
SSDF	Somalia Salvation Democratic Front
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNG	Transitional National Government
UN	United Nations
UNITAF	United Task Force Somalia
UNOSOM-I	The First United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNOSOM-II	The Second United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
VBIED	Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive Device
WAMY	World Assembly for Muslim Youth
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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Index

9/11, 16, 42, 60, 94–95

A
Aba, 138–140, 149
Abacha, Sani, 123, 125, 143
Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, 62
Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, 61, 72–73
Abia, 138–140
Abigal, 55
Abiola, M. K. O., 124
Abiteye, 141
Abu-Bakr, Abdulsalami, 125
Abuja, 141, 155–157
Abyssinian–Adal War, 49
Abyssinian Christian, 48
Adaka Boro Avengers, 142
Adam, Jafa'ar, 152
Adams, Ganiyu, 144
Addis Ababa, 58, 61, 67, 77, 80, 92
Addis Ababa Agreement, 57
Aden, Sharif Hassan Sheikh, 73
Adwa, 50
Afghanistan, 13–18, 21–22, 32, 62–63, 70, 74, 79, 91, 95
Af-Maxaa-tiri, 48
African Union, 67, 74, 85, 90, 156, 171
African Union Mission in Somalia, 57, 59, 73, 79–86, 102, 105, 107–109, 111–112, 114–116, 171
Agbinibo, Madoch, 141
Agip, 134
Ahadith, 30, 153
Ahlulsunna wal'jama'al hijra (Muslim Youth Organization), 151–153, 161–162, 172
Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, 77, 107, 171
Ahmad, Abdullahi Yusuf, 65–66
Ahmed, Sharif Sheikh, 76, 94, 99
Aideed, Hussein Farrah, 59
Aideed, Mohammed Farah, 55–57, 95

airstrikes, 16, 28, 31, 87, 96, 112
Ajegunle, 133
al-Afghani, Ibrahim Haji Jama, 70, 78, 80, 82, 100
al-Amriki, Abu Mansur, 82, 85, 96–97, 100
al-Baghdadi, Abu Abdullah al-Rashid, 27
al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr, xvi, 13, 24, 28–31, 33–34, 41, 43–44, 86, 108, 114, 160, 162–163
al-Baghdadi, Abu Hamzah, 23
al-Banna, Hassan, xv, 15, 22–33
al-Barakat, 60
al-Barnawi, Abu Musab, 160–161
al-Bashir, Omar, 10
Alero, 141
al-Haramain, 60
Ali Mohamed Gedi, 72
al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya, 54, 58–60, 63, 69–70, 74, 77–78, 85, 91–96, 101–102, 171
al-Jawlani, Abu Muhammad, 28
Allah, xvi, 14, 30, 34, 51, 98
Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism, 64–65, 94
Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism, 63, 171
Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, 73–74, 76, 97, 99, 109, 171
Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (Asmara Wing), 76–78, 171
allies, 13, 16, 19, 35, 57, 65, 74
al Masri, Abu Hafs, 95
al-Naba, 160
Alpha Konare, 74
al-Qaeda, xvi–xvii, 6, 12–23, 25, 27–29, 32–34, 40–44, 46–47, 57, 60, 63, 65, 67, 69, 74, 78–79, 82, 91, 93–102, 104, 110, 113–114, 116–117, 150, 155, 161, 165–167, 169
al-Qaeda in Iraq, 25, 27, 99, 102, 106, 171
al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, 156
al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, 156
al-Siddiq, Abu Bakr, 30
al-Sudani, Abu Taha, 69, 96
al-Turki, Hassan Abdullah Hersi, 78
al-Wahhab, Mohammad, xvi, 15, 33
al-Zarqawi, Abu Musab, 21–23, 25–27, 33, 42, 97, 99, 106, 114
al-Zawahiri, Ayman, 15–16, 18, 23, 28, 33, 65, 72, 97, 99
Ambassador Hotel, 73
American military, 15, 24, 57, 96
American troops, 13, 28, 57
Amin, Idi, 10
Amnesty, 131, 140–143, 158, 171
Amniyat, 85
Amoco, 51, 56
Anabhaani, Abu Yusuf Saalih, 99
Anambra, 140
Anambra State Vigilante Services, 140
Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement, 50
Annang, 138
annihilation, 39, 139
Anole Brigade, 77–78

apocalypse, 29
apocalyptic prophecy, 29–30, 34
apostate(s), xv–xvi, 17, 21–23, 28–29, 34, 41–44, 79, 98–99, 101, 107, 112, 116, 154, 167
Arabian Peninsula, 62, 91, 95, 150
Arafat, Yasser, 36
Arewa Peoples' Congress, 144, 146, 171
Armitage, Richard, 57
Army of Hisbul, 72
Asawana Deadly Force of Niger Delta, 142
assassination, 58, 75, 125, 146
asymmetric, 43, 106, 114, 148
Atatürk, xv
Atatürk Airport, 41–42
Ato, Osman, 56
AU peacekeepers, 68, 73
Aweys, Hassan Dahir, 54, 60, 62–63, 68–69, 76–78, 82, 93–94, 98, 101
Ayro, Aden, 69, 74, 85, 91, 98–99, 101, 104–105, 107–108, 111, 113, 115
Azzam, Abdullah, 14–17, 21, 33, 167

B
Ba'ath Party, 23
Babangida, Ibrahim Badamasi, 123–125
Baga massacre, 159
Baidoa, 64–65, 68, 113
Bakassi Boys, 138–140
Bakassi Peninsula, 139
Bakool, 85
Barawe, 82, 85, 87, 96, 108
Barre, Mohammad Siad, 51–52, 54–56, 58–70, 81, 91–92
Battle of Mogadishu, 57
Bauchi, 154, 157
Bay, 80, 82, 85
bay'ah, xvii, 28, 46–47, 85, 117, 155, 160
Bayelsa State, 141–142
Begin, Menachem, 36
believers, 43–44, 146, 150
bello, 14
Bello, Ahmadu, 147
Benin, 120
Benisede oil flow station, 133
Berbera, 52
Berlin Conference, 49
Biafra, 123, 138–139
Biafra Civil War, 138
Biafra House, 138
bid'a, 120
Bigley, Ken, 25
bin Laden, Osama, 13–19, 22–23, 25, 30, 33–34, 42–44, 65, 93–95, 97, 99–100, 155, 167
Black Hawk, 57, 95, 101

Boko Haram, xii–xiv, xvi–xxi, 6, 11, 21, 32, 40, 44, 46–47, 117, 119, 126, 150–151, 153–163, 165–166, 169
Bonaparte, Napoléon, 1–2, 35
borderlands, 48
Bori, 136
Borno, 146, 152–153, 155, 158–159
Boro, Isaac Adaka, 137
Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 56
Brass Creek Manifold, 142
Britain, 49–50
British, 25, 38, 50, 53, 120, 122, 124, 136, 167, 173
British colonial rule, 121
British Petroleum, 121–122
British Somaliland, 49–51
brutality, 23, 26, 28–30, 44, 74, 85
Buhari, Muhammadu, 123–124, 128, 141–142, 148, 159–160
Buratai, Tukur, 146
Bush administration, 60, 63–64
Byzantium, 49

C

Cairo, xiv, 59
Cairo Declaration, 59
caliphate(s), xv, 14, 22, 27–30, 32–33, 41, 43–44, 54, 120, 150, 159, 161
Cameroon, 120–121, 139, 157–160
Central Hotel, 86
Central Intelligence Agency, 13, 64, 69, 171
Chad, 152
charitable organizations, 38, 54
charitable services, 36, 54
Chechnya, 62
Chevron, 51, 56, 130, 134, 141
Chibok, 46, 157–158
Chinese oil companies, 133
Christian missionary schools, 121
Christians, 34, 116, 124–125, 149
Christian South, 118, 121–122, 124, 154
civilian(s), 11, 13, 21, 25, 27–28, 56, 64, 68, 73, 106, 124–126, 133, 159, 161–162
civilian casualties, 28, 157
Civilian Joint Task Force, 155, 171
civil war, xi, 11, 55–56, 82, 103, 123, 137
clan politics, 53, 73, 78, 84, 86, 92, 97–98, 104, 106, 108, 112–113, 116
clans, 47–48, 53, 55, 59, 68–69, 72–73, 81, 91, 95, 97, 105, 110, 113, 115
Clausewitz, 4, 8, 12, 35–36, 38
Clifford Constitution, 121
Clough Creek Tebidaba Agip Pipeline Manifold, 141
coalition, 23, 37, 57, 61, 76, 78
Cold War, 5, 7, 52, 55
colonial, 38, 46, 49–50, 117, 122, 136, 147
communism, 5, 10

community, 14–15, 18, 23, 33, 43, 63, 120, 130, 133, 136, 142
Conference on National Reconciliation, 57
Conoco, 51, 56–57
Conquest of Abyssinia, 49
constituency, 43, 59, 153
Consultative Council of Islamic Courts, 60
conventional, xii, 5–6, 10, 12, 43, 73–74, 103, 106–108, 111
corruption, 63, 95, 118–119, 123, 148, 154, 168
counterterrorism, 24, 42, 95, 166, 169
coup, 41–42, 51–52, 123–125, 137, 143, 148
Critical Terrorism Studies, 171
crude oil, 129, 131, 134, 141
crusaders, 29, 100
Cuba, 52

D

Dabiq, 30–31
Damaturu, 158
Damboa, 159
dan Fodio, Usman, 157, 161
dar al-Islam, 23
Dar es Salaam, 60, 96
Darood, 47, 61
Da'wa, 32, 153
Declaration of Demand for a Sovereign State of Biafra from the People and Government of Nigeria, 138
deduction, xix, xxi, 3
democracy, xvi, 6, 75, 126, 143
dependent variables, xxi, 3
Derg regime, 52
Dervish, 50
deterrence theory, 7
Dhulbahante, 55
Dibi, 141
Digil-Mirifle, 47–48
dilemma, 6, 37, 129
Dir, 47
disorientation, 37, 42, 102, 105–106, 128
diya, 48
Diyala, 31
Djibouti, 47, 49, 55–56, 61
drone strike, 84, 115, 166
drought, 48, 71, 80

E

East Africa, 80, 94
East Africa embassy bombings, 101
East Germany, 52
Efik, 138
Egbesu Boys of Africa, 123, 132–133, 144, 172
Egypt, xv, 22, 32, 54–56, 101, 141, 167

Egyptian Islamic Jihad, 22
El-Adde, 86
election(s), xv–xvi, 124, 126, 134
embassy bombings, 60, 91, 96
Emperor Yeshaq, 49
empire(s), xv, 2, 31, 34, 44, 49, 147
enemies, 7, 27, 41–43, 46, 55, 98, 100–101, 103, 106–108, 111, 120
enemies of the Lord, 49
enemy combatants, 31, 42
environmental, 127
environmental degradation, 118–119, 134, 137
Eritrea, 61, 63–64, 68
Escravos, 133
Esos, 143–144
Ethiopia, 61
Ethiopian Empire, 50
Ethiopian forces, 58, 61–62, 68, 73–74, 76, 79, 82–83, 92–94, 101–105, 109, 112–113, 167
Ethiopian National Defense Force, 51–52, 172
Ethiopian troops, 64
Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Decree, 123
Executive Order 13224, 60
extraction rights, 118, 122, 132
extralegal responses, 37, 115
extremist(s), xi, 37, 53

F
4.5 formula, 62
Family Law, 52
famine, 48, 80
far enemy, 15, 17, 19–20, 25, 41, 98, 101, 114, 116, 150, 155, 163, 165, 167
Farrah, Hussein Mohamed, 73
Fasehun, Fredrick, 143–144
fatwa, xiv, 13–14, 19, 21, 33
Federal Government of Somalia, 47
financial support, 28, 39, 54, 70
Fodio, Uthman dan, 120
forced conscripts, 77
foreign fighters, 62, 75, 78–79, 82, 85, 97–98, 100, 104, 107, 110, 113
foreign occupation, 38, 102–103
foreign policy, 16–17, 95, 168
foreign recruits, 75, 97–98
foreign troops, 79, 83, 93
France, 49
Franco-Prussian Treaty, 35
Frazer, Jendayi, 67
freedom fighter(s), xvii, 7, 32, 36, 103, 132
French troops, 2, 35
Fulani insurgency, 120

G
gaining legitimacy, 37, 42, 102, 109

Garissa, 81, 84
Gedi, Ali Mohamed, 73
Gedo, 54, 85
generalizable results, 2
General John Aguiyi-Ironsi, 123
General Yakubu Gowon, 123
genocide, xi, 4, 10, 135
Gingir, 152
Gobir, 120
Godane, Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed (aka Mukhtar Abu Zubair), 44, 47, 69, 74–75, 78–80, 82, 84–85, 91, 96–100, 104–105, 107–108, 110–114, 116, 156, 161, 163
Gokana, 142
Gold Mohur Hotel, 95
Grande Armée, 2, 35
grand strategy, 9
Greater Somalia, 53, 58, 93, 97, 102
Gudu, 120
guerrilla, 6, 9, 11, 24, 70, 74, 84, 86, 103, 105–106, 108, 111–112, 114, 116, 127, 130, 149, 151, 161–162
Gulf of Aden, 66
Gusau, Aminu Aliyu, 145
GWoT, xvii, 9, 172
Gwoza, 159

H

Habar Gedir Ayr, 62
Habir Gadir, 55
Haji, Mohammed Yusuf, 81
Hamas, 38
Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin, 69, 79
hard power, 9
Hargeisa, 74
Harti, 77
Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki, 77
Hassan, Hussein, 85
Hassan, Sayid Muhammad Abdullah, 50
hate crimes, 4, 36
Haud, 50
Hausa, 120
Hausa–Fulani, 122–123, 136–137, 146–147
Hawiye, 47, 55, 73, 77, 84
Hawiye/Habr Gedir, 60
hegemony, 13, 56, 62
Hersi, Zakariya Ismail Ahmed, 86
Hiran, 87
Hizbul Islam, 68, 77–78, 80
Horn of Africa, 47, 50, 66
hudud, 72
Hu Jintao, 134
humanitarian, 56

humanitarian aid, 11, 56
humanitarian crisis, 126
human rights, 18, 37, 42, 52, 73, 126–127, 140, 143
Human Rights Watch, 136, 143, 172
Hussein, Nur Hassan, 73

I
Ibadan, 144
Ibibio, 138
ibn Abi Talib, Ali, 30
ibn Affan, Uthman, 30
ibn al-Khattab, Umar, 30
ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, Ahmed, 49
ibn Nafaa, Okba, 32
ibn Taymiyyah, xvi, 15, 33, 152, 161
ibn Taymiyyah Masjid Mosque, 154
ideology, xi, xiii–xiv, xx, 14, 33, 36, 59, 78–79, 92, 100–101, 110–112, 114, 116, 152, 161–162, 165
Igbo, 123, 127, 132, 136–140, 149, 159
Ijaw, 138
Ijaw National Congress, 123, 132, 172
Ijaw Youth Council, 132, 172
Ilaje, 130
Imo, 140
Imo state, 142
imperialism, 62
improvised explosive devices, 75–76, 83, 108
independence, 11, 46–48, 51–50, 53–54, 117, 120, 122, 128, 136, 138, 147
independent variable, 3
India, 32, 49
Indian Ocean, 66
induction, 3
infidels, 17, 28–30, 34, 97, 100, 113, 157–158
influence(s), xv, xviii, xx, 14–15, 21, 23, 33, 47–48, 54, 61, 63, 65, 75, 85, 89, 91, 94, 122, 127, 145, 152–153, 155, 165
instability, 39, 53, 56
insurgency(ies), xi, xxi, 4–7, 11, 36, 63, 65, 94, 105–108, 111, 116, 127
insurgents, xix, 10, 13, 24, 56, 126
interests, 18, 41, 57, 84, 87, 95, 122, 129, 132, 140, 146–147, 157, 169
Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 61, 67, 79, 172
Interim Governing Council, 125, 172
interim government, 23, 55
international community, 63, 66–67, 79, 99
International Islamic Relief Organization, 90, 172
interstate war, 5–6, 10–12
invasion, 15–16, 50, 67, 70–71, 97, 100, 103, 113
Iranian Revolution, 145, 152
Iraq, 16, 21–25, 27, 32, 62
Iraqi military, 31
Isaaq, 47–48, 74
Isan, 138

Islamic Authority, 81
Islamic Courts Union, 60, 62–71, 73, 76–77, 85, 90–94, 97, 101–103, 107, 172
Islamic Emirate of Somalia, 76, 82
Islamic extremism, 36
Islamic Front, 77–78
Islamic government, 54, 92, 94, 113, 116
Islamic Group, 54
Islamic Movement in Nigeria, 172
Islamic revolution, xv–xvi
Islamic State, xii, xv–xvi, 20–22, 27, 29, 31–32, 65, 74, 102, 114, 116, 145, 157, 160, 172
Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, 28
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, 28
Islamic world, 30, 101
Islamism, xv
Islamist(s), xiv–xvi, 58, 60, 63–64, 72, 95
Isoko, 138
Israel, 17, 101, 168
Israelites, 141
Italian Somaliland, 49–51
Italy, 49–50
Itsekiri, 138

J
Jabhat al-Nusra, 28
Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Jihād, 21, 23, 172
Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa), 157–158, 161
Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'awaI kamatu Sunna (Movement for the Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of Sunni Islam), 152
Jama'atul Tajdid Islam (Movement for the Revival of Islam), 152, 172
Jesse, 135
Jess, Omar, 57
Jews, 34
Jigawa, 145
jihad, xvi, 13–17, 19, 23, 27, 33, 48, 50, 78–79, 82, 86–87, 96–97, 100–101, 104, 113, 120, 152–153, 155
jihadist(s), xiv–xvi, 20–21, 24, 33, 43, 91, 93–95, 98, 101, 105, 110, 111, 117, 161–162, 165
Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force, 142
Joint Task Force, 131, 155, 162, 172
Jordan, 21, 101
Juba, 32
Jubaland State, 69

K
Kaduna, 128, 141, 146, 149, 156, 161
Kaiama Declaration, 132
Kampala, 79, 109
Kanamma, 162
Kanem-Borno, 146
Kano, 128, 144–145, 154, 156–157, 159–160
Kassig, Peter, 30

Kenya, 61
Kenyan forces, 80, 109
Kharajites, xvi, 34
Khartoum, 11
kidnapping, 47, 92, 118, 131
kill and go, 130
King Ibanichuka of Okrika, 121
King Jaja of Opobo, 121
King Koko of Brass, 121
King Sa'ad al-Din, 49
Kismayo, 57, 76–78, 80, 83–85, 87, 108
Kobane, 30
Kurdish, 28, 41
Kurdish forces, 30–31

L

Laascanood, 69
Lagos, 120, 133–134, 141, 143–144
Lamu, 81
Land Use Act, 123
Lawan, Abubakar, 151–153, 162
Lebanon, 16, 32
legitimacy, 14–15, 18, 23, 30, 37–38, 40, 43–44, 59–60, 70, 79, 82–83, 90, 92, 102, 107, 109–111, 115, 155, 163, 169
level of analysis, xix, 2–3
liberating Somalia, 108, 116
Libutti, Frank, 57
Libya, 32–33
Lower Juba, 77, 81, 85
Lugey, Abdisalan Hirsi Mahmud, 65
Luuq, 58, 70, 92–93
Lyttleton Constitution, 122

M

1st Mechanized Division, 156
MacPherson Constitution, 122
Madalla, 156
Madobe, Ahmed, 69, 78
Mahdi, xvi, 29, 44
Maiduguri, 151, 153–155, 158, 160
Maitatsine, 128, 144–145, 153, 161
Maitatsine Riots, 161
Majeerteen Harti Darood, 73
Maka al-Mukarramah Hotel, 86
Makaraba, 141
Marchand, Raymond, 56
Marehan, 55, 77
martial law, 68
martyrdom, 75, 104
Marwa, Muhammad, 144
Mawdudi, Sayyid Abu al-A'la, 96

mayor of Mogadishu, 55
McBride, Sean, 36
Mecca, 48, 100
media, xi, xviii, xx, 14, 21, 38, 44, 46, 65, 67, 75, 97, 99, 104, 109–110, 118, 158
Menachem Begin, 36
Mengistu Haile Mariam, 52
Merka, 60, 62
Middle East, xxiii, 15, 18, 22, 54, 69, 95, 155, 168
Midwest State, 137
militias, 11, 23, 55, 58, 63, 65, 77, 81, 84, 90, 93–94, 104, 119, 122, 126–128, 130–131, 133, 138
Miss World Riots, 161
moderate(s), xiv, xvi, 15, 22, 25, 33, 37, 53, 60, 62–63, 65–66, 68, 70, 73, 76–77, 91, 93–94, 97, 101, 107, 109
modern, xii, 12, 36, 46, 48, 117, 119, 122, 145, 157
Mogadishu, 55–56, 60–61, 64, 66, 68–71, 73–74, 76, 80–81, 86–87, 95–96, 103, 105, 108, 112, 115
Mogadishu Group, 60–61
Mohamed Ibrahim Hayle, 77
Mohammed, Ali Mahdi, 55, 57, 59
Mohammed, Murtala, 123–124
Mohammed, Sagir, 146
Moscow, 1–2
Mosul, 30–31
Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, 138–139, 146, 172
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, 133–134, 172
Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, 123, 134–135, 172
Muammar Gaddafi, 10
Mugabe, Robert, 10
Muhammad al-Jawlani, 28
Muhammad, Fazul Abdullah, 96
Mujahid, Abubakar, 145
mujahidin, 13–14, 17, 32
Mujahidin Shura Council, 27, 172
Mukhtar Robow, 69
multinational coalition, 23, 30, 162–163
multinational oil companies, 119, 122, 127, 130–131, 136, 140, 147–148
multinational peacekeeping forces, 56
Mumin, Abdul Qadir, 85
Muslim Brotherhood, xviii, 15, 22, 33, 145
Muslim Brothers, 144–145
Muslim conquest, 49
Muslim forces, 49
Muslim North, 118, 121–123, 127
Muslim Student Society of Nigeria, 145, 172
Muslim Youth Center, 78, 110, 172
muwālāt, 120
MV Faina, 66

N

Nabhan, Salah Ali Salah, 96
Nairobi, 60, 84, 96, 109

Nairobi peace accords, 61
Nana of Itsekiri, 121
Nasrullah Uprising, 51
National Assembly, 148
National Congress of British West Africa, 121
nationalism, 65, 87, 92, 101, 113, 123, 127, 140
National Salvation Council, 59, 173
NATO, 41–42
near enemy, 15, 22–23, 27, 33, 114, 116, 155, 163, 166–167
negotiate, 42, 93, 104, 113, 163
neocolonial, 148
neocolonialization, 118
Niger, 120
Niger Delta, 118–120, 122–123, 126, 128–131, 133–134, 136–137, 140–142
Niger Delta Amnesty Program, 128, 142, 148
Niger Delta Avengers, 138, 140–141
Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate, 142
Niger Delta Justice Defence Group, 142
Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Agreement, 134
Niger Delta Red Squad, 142
Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusaders, 142
Niger Delta Volunteer Force, 132, 136–137, 173
Nigerian Federation, 127
Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation, 141
Nigerian Petroleum Development Corporation, 141
Nigeria's Constituent Assembly, 124
Nigeria's first Ten Year Plan, 122
Northeastern Nigeria, 154, 158–159
Northeastern Province of Kenya, 47
Northern Alliance, 16
Northern Frontier District, 51, 53
Northern Frontier District Liberation Army, 53, 173
Northern Nigeria, 120, 144–146, 149, 152, 154, 160–161
Northern People's Congress, 121, 147
North Korea, 52

O

Obama, Barack, 28, 160
Obasanjo, Olusegun, 123–125, 131, 140, 143, 163
Occupied Enemy Territory, 50
Oduduwa Peoples' Congress, 133, 143–144, 146, 173
offensive jihad, 14
Office for Supervising Foreign Agencies, 71
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 73
Ogaden, 49–52, 54, 58, 77–78, 92, 94
Ogadeni, 55
Ogaden National Liberation Front, 52, 63, 67, 94, 102, 173
Ogaden War, 52–53
Ogoja, 138
Ogoni, 132, 134–136, 138

Ogoni Bill of Rights, 135
Ogor-Oteri oil pipeline, 142
oil infrastructure, 24, 140
Oil in Navigable Waters Act, 123
Oil Rivers Protectorate, 120
oil spills, 119, 129, 134
Ojukwu, Odumegwu, 138
Okerenkoko, 133
Okoye, Gilbert, 139
Onitsha, 139–140
operational, 59, 70, 87, 91
Operation Crocodile Smile, 142
Operation Desert Storm, 13
Operation Lafiya Dole, 159
Operation Linda Nchi, 80, 109
operations, xiii–xiv, xvii, 20, 27, 36, 41, 43, 47, 56, 75, 83–84, 95, 101, 104–105, 109, 123, 134, 157
opposition, 16, 37, 55, 61, 71–72, 97–98, 108, 124, 126, 138, 146, 149
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, 51, 123
Organization of the Islamic Conference, 124
Oromo Liberation Front, 173
Ottoman Empire, xiv–xv
Otunana, 141
Overnarame, 121
Owerri, 139

P
Pakistan, 62, 101
Palestine, 38
Palmyra, 31
perception of the other, xiii–xiv, 40–41, 44, 108, 148–149
perpetrator(s), xi, 37, 101, 129, 168–169
Persia, 49
Peshawar, xvi, 21–22
Petroleum Act, 123
Phillips, 51, 56
pipelines, 129, 133–135, 141–142
pirates, 66–67, 131
political change(s), xii, xv, 38, 106, 109, 119
political concessions, xiii, xvii, 7–8, 11, 21, 36–37, 41–42, 97, 105, 114, 129, 162–163
political Islam, xv, 54
political parties, 38
popular support, 20, 22, 34, 37–39, 44, 76, 92, 94, 107, 109, 111–112, 153, 166, 169
population, 3, 26, 38, 46–47, 67, 72, 75, 90, 107–108, 115, 117, 120, 136, 143, 148–149
Port Hartcourt, 137
port of Kismayo, 52
Portuguese, 49
Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, 123
propaganda, 30, 71, 98, 100
Prophet Muhammad, 30, 48, 120
Prussia, 35

Prussian Army, 35
public goods, 36, 43, 72, 104, 110
public opinion, 19, 37, 39, 42, 111–112, 129
public support, 19, 38, 109
Puntland, 47, 61, 64
puppet regimes, 15, 22, 62, 145
purge, 82, 85, 98, 100, 105, 125

Q

qat, 54
Qoqani, 81
Quran, xiv, 30, 32, 53–54, 85, 145, 153
Quranic, 152
Quraysh, 30, 48
Qutb, Sayyid, xv–xvi, 15, 22–23, 33, 96, 167

R

radical, xiv, 21, 23–24, 62, 69–71, 91, 152
radicalism, 70
radicalize, 25, 37, 71, 128, 152
radically, 72, 142
Rahanweyn, 48, 82
Ramadi, 31
Ransome-Kuti, Beko, 143–144
Raqqa, 31
Ras Kamboni Brigade, 77–78, 83, 113
Raso, 87
rational, xix, 4–5, 37, 129
reaction, 26, 37, 39–40, 42–43, 79–80, 105, 109, 115, 120, 129, 148
realism, 4
recruitment, 70, 110
Red Egbesu Water Lions, 142
Red Sea, 49
reform, xiv, 37, 72, 124, 150, 157, 165
refugee crisis, 80
regionalism, 123
religious groups, 40, 115, 126
remittances, 90, 103
Republic of Kenya, 51
resources, xiv, 16, 28, 40, 48, 53, 55, 59, 81, 84, 105–106, 114, 116, 118, 122, 125, 127, 131–132, 136–137, 140, 147–148
retaliation, 25, 41–42, 48, 133, 158
Richards Constitution, 122
risk, 1, 25, 37, 39, 103, 139
Rivers State, 137
Riyadh, 15, 18–20
Robow, Mukhtar, 78, 80, 82, 98
Ros Kamboni, 68
Royal Niger Company, 120–121, 173
Russia, 1–2, 31–32
Russian–German Legion, 35

Russian military, 1, 84

S
Sabon Gari, 159
Saladin, 29
Salafi, 22, 75, 91, 94, 101, 110
Salafism, 92, 111, 116
Salafist, 53–54, 59, 72, 78, 85, 91, 97, 104, 106, 110, 149, 152, 161
Salafi/Wahhabi, 54
Salafi-Wahhabism, 72
Sambisa Forest, 159
Sana'a, 59
Sani, Alhadji Ahmed, 125
Saudi Arabia, 13, 15, 19, 32, 54, 60, 64, 90–91, 101, 150, 153
Saudi royal family, 30
scramble for Africa, 49
secular, xv, 11, 25, 41–42, 51, 62, 90, 92, 94, 101, 122, 124, 127, 144–145, 152–153, 161
Shangole, Faud Mohamed Khalaf, 69
sharia, xiv–xvi, xxi, 11, 21, 23–24, 58, 62–63, 65, 71–72, 76, 85, 93–94, 97–98, 103, 108, 110, 112, 120–122, 124–125, 127, 138, 144–145, 149–150, 152–153, 155–156, 161–163
Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, 62
Shekau, Abubaker, 44, 151, 155–158, 160–163
Shell Oil Company, 121–122, 131, 133–136
Sheriff, Ali Modu, 153
Shermarke, Abdi Rashid Ali, 51
Shia, 22, 27, 41, 146
Shifta War, 53
Shi'ite, 22, 25, 27, 34, 145, 152
shirk, xvi
Shonekan, Ernest, 125
Shuaibu, Ahmed, 145
Shugari, Alhaji Shehu, 124
Shura Council, 62, 69, 71, 80–81, 84, 94, 104, 156
Sidikou, Maman, 86
smart power, 10
social media, viii, xx, 30, 42–43, 162
social scientists, 3
social services, 53, 59, 69
soft power, 10
Sokoto, 146
Sokoto Caliphate, 120–122, 125, 147, 157, 161
Somalia, 61
Somalia Republic, 51
Somali Civil War, 55
Somali government, 51, 53, 59, 82, 112, 115
Somaliland, 47, 51, 56, 59, 64, 74, 90
Somali National Army, 84, 102, 114, 173
Somali National Front, 56, 93, 173
Somali nationalists, 51
Somali National Movement, 55

Somali National Regional State, 47
Somali Patriotic Movement, 55
Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council, 61, 173
Southeastern Nigeria, 120, 129, 138–139
Southeast State, 137
Southern Nigeria, 132
Southern Nigerian, 121–122
southern Somalia, 48, 55, 60, 62, 64, 74, 78, 80–82, 84, 86, 96, 104
South Sudan, 11, 39, 61
South Sudan Defense Forces, 11
Soviets, 13–14, 16–18, 21
Soviet Union, 7, 12, 17, 51–52
Special Anti-Robbery Squad, 157
Specially Designated Global Terrorist, 156
splinter factions, 40, 115
State Security Services, 154
strategic approach, 2, 5, 7, 10, 166
strategic objective(s), xi, xiii, xvii–xix, xxi, 2, 7, 13, 17–18, 20, 29, 35–36, 40–41, 43–44, 47, 65, 89, 91–92, 108, 111–117, 120, 131, 151, 162–163, 165
strategic studies, xxiii, 1, 5–7, 10
strategic terrorism, xiii, xviii–xix, xxi, 9, 34–40, 42–44, 46, 89, 91, 93, 102, 105–106, 108–109, 111, 113–117, 127, 129, 151, 162–163, 165–166
strategic theorists, 5–7, 10
strategic theory, xiii, xvii–xx, 2, 4, 6–7, 41, 113, 165–166
strategy(ies), xii–xiv, xvi–xvii, xix, 2, 7–10, 15, 18–20, 24, 26, 29, 33, 35, 38, 40–42, 46, 55, 70, 102, 106, 114, 116–117, 155, 161, 163, 165, 169
sub-clans, 47, 55, 59, 61–62, 77
sub-national governance, 59
Sudan, 10–11, 32, 43, 61, 78, 94
Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, 11
Suez Canal, 49, 66
Sufi, 53–54, 75, 77, 91, 94, 96, 104, 110–111, 113, 115–116, 149
Sufism, 53
suicide attack(s), 10, 18–20, 65, 72–73, 76, 79, 86, 97, 108
suicide bombers, 15, 21, 30, 43, 79, 84, 97, 155–156, 160
sultanate of Ifat, 49
Sultan of Sokoto, 120
Sunnah, 30, 32
Sunni, xiv–xv, 22, 24–25, 27, 30, 145, 152
supply lines, 1, 83
Supreme Islamic Court, 62
Supreme Revolutionary Council, 51
Sykes–Picot Treaty, 28
Syria, 28, 32, 37
Syrian, 30
Syrian forces, 31

T

tactical, xiii–xiv, xvii, xxi, 7, 16–18, 20, 25, 36, 41, 47, 89, 105, 109, 114, 161, 163, 166, 168–169
taghoot, 97

tajdid, 161
takfir, xiv, 15, 22–23, 120, 154
takfiri doctrine, xiv, xvi, xviii, 20–22, 41, 44, 74, 82, 85–86, 104, 107–108, 112–113, 115, 162
Takfir wal-Hijira, xvi
Taliban, 60, 132
Tamuno, Tekena, 147
Tanzania, 18, 78, 94–95
target government(s), xiii, 20–21, 37–42, 111, 115
target response, 37, 42, 102
terrorism literature, xiii, 2
terrorism scholars, xvii–xviii, 2–7, 37
terrorism studies, 6–7, 10
terrorist attack, 11, 92
terror network, 43
TFG forces, 63–64, 67–68, 74, 90, 102, 105
theoretical models, xvii–xviii, 2–3, 5–6, 36
trade, 49, 58, 61, 66, 120, 122, 137
Transitional Federal Government, 61–63, 65, 67, 72–74, 76–77, 80–82, 93–94, 97, 101, 103–104, 106–109, 111, 113, 167, 173
transitional government, 59
Transitional National Government, 61–62, 73, 173
tribe, 29–30, 47, 74, 130
troop strength, 29, 82–83, 86
Trust Territory of Somalia, 51
Turkey, xv, 41–42

U

Ubaidah, Abu, 47, 85
Uganda, 10, 61, 76, 79–80, 84, 102
Ugandan forces, 79, 109, 115
Ugandan soldiers, 112
Umar, Ahmad (aka Abu Ubaidah), 85–86, 109
Umayyad dynasty, xvi
ummah, xv, 144
Umuahia, 139
Umuechem, 130
unbounded rationality, 4
unconventional warfare, 5
UNITAF, 57–58, 63, 95, 173
United Nations, 73, 82
United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 135
United Nations Security Council, 82, 173
United Somali Congress, 55, 92
United States, 16, 23–25, 52, 57, 60, 63–64, 67, 90, 100, 132, 150, 156, 167, 173
United States National Security Strategy, 8
United States National Strategy for Counterterrorism, 156
Unity of Islamic Youth, 54
UNOSOM-I, 56, 173
UNOSOM-II, 57–58, 173
UN Resolution 733, 67

UN Resolution 1425, 67
UN Resolution 1725, 67
Urhobo, 138
U.S. embassy, 57
U.S. invasion of Iraq, 25
U.S. State Department, xii, 74, 101, 109
Uwazurike, Ralph, 138

V
vanguard, xv, 15, 33–34, 44, 141
victory, 1, 49–50, 58–59, 64, 78
violent attacks, 4, 37, 106, 114, 128, 169

W
Wagalla Massacre, 53
Wahhabi, 30, 91
Wahhabism, 91
Wahhabist, 60
war crimes, 11, 68
warfare, xii, 6, 9–12, 14, 39, 55, 103
warlords, 39, 55–56, 58–59, 63–64, 73, 90, 92, 106
war on terror, xvii, 16, 126, 167
war profiteers, 55
Warri oil refinery, 133
Washington, 57, 60, 96, 138, 160
Waterloo, 35
Wavre, 35
weapons, xi, 28, 44, 51–52, 55, 67–68, 75, 85, 90, 140, 154, 171
Western, 21, 54, 75, 85, 91, 122, 131, 133, 145
Western education, 121, 152–154
Western Europe, 150
Westgate Shopping Mall, xx, 46, 84, 86
Wetangula, Moses, 81
white phosphorous, 68
winning hearts and minds, 24, 37, 43, 106, 128
Woldemikael, Tafari Makonnen, 50
World Assembly for Muslim Youth, 90, 173
World Trade Center, 18
World War I, xiv, 6, 121, 173
World War II, 5, 173

Y
Yazidis, 28
Yemen, 32, 52, 59, 93, 95
Yemen Hotel Bombings, 18
Yobe, 154, 158
Yoruba, 124, 127, 133, 136, 143–144
Yusuf, Mohamed Haji, 54
Yusuf, Mohammed, 152–154, 160–163

Z

Zakzaky, Ibrahim, 145–146
Zamfara, 125, 149
Zaria, 146
Zaria Massacre, 146
Zenawi, Meles, 67
Zimbabwe's, 10